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SERMONS

UPON

Several Occasions;

By the Reverend

Mr. MATTHEW CLARKE:

Some of which were never before published.

To which are added,

Some MEMOIRS of his LIFE,

AND THE

SERMON preach'd at his FUNERAL

By DANIEL NEAL, M. A.

Pfal. cxij. 6. The Righteous shall be in everlasting Remembrance.

L O N D O N:

Printed for Theodore Sanders, at the Bell in Little-Britain, and Sold by Richard Ford, and John Candler in the Poultry. MDCCXXVII.



TO THE
CHURCH

AND

CONGREGATION

Among whom the late Reverend

Mr. Matthew Clarke

Labour'd in Word and Doctrine,

THESE

REMAINS

Of their late most excellent and worthy Pastor

are humbly dedicated.

TO THE

OF THE

AND

CITY





THE
PREFACE,

CONTAINING

Some Memoirs of the Life of the Reverend

Mr. *Matthew Clarke.*



THE reverend author of the following sermons was so well known and beloved by Protestant Dissenters, and others, that I persuade my self this collection of them into one volume will meet with a general acceptance; but those who enjoyed his ministerial labours, and had the happiness of his acquaintance, will have a more particular esteem for the remains of so excellent a minister of Christ, in which *being dead, he yet speaketh.*

A 3

Tho^r

Tho' his labours in the pulpit were abundantly blest'd, to the conversion and establishment of many souls, yet so great was his modesty, that he could not be persuaded to appear in print, 'till he had pass'd the meridian of life, and was called by divine providence to preach out of his ordinary course on some very publick and solemn occasions; as, to the *Societies for Reformation of Manners*, at the *solemn separation of persons to the pastoral office*, and at the *funerals of some of his brethren in the ministry*: These are the chief arguments of the sermons which were publish'd in his life time, except three or four which the pressing importunity of some friends obtain'd from him. I have wish'd that some of his discourses at the merchants lecture at *Pinners-Hall*, which in the opinion of the best judges, would have done honour to his name and memory, might have been made publick, but his aversion to it was insuperable, and he took such care of his papers before his death, that no collections can be made from them.

However, I have ventured to present the publick with three sermons, which he preached at the lecture in *Hanover-Street*, on those words of our blessed Saviour, *Luke xiv. 23. Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled*, which were so acceptable to the audience, and in particular to an honourable lady then present, that she prevail'd with him to transcribe them for her private use, and with her permission they are now publish'd. If the reverend author had design'd them for the press, he would have

the Rev. Mr. Matth. Clarke. vii

have corrected the language in some places; but as they now appear, they are worthy to be seen and read of all men, and may serve by the divine blessing to persuade sinners to devote themselves to Christ, and to revive in the hearts of serious professors desires of coming to the *gospel entertainment*, which too many live in the neglect of.

At the close of the volume I have added the sermon preached at his funeral, where the reader will find a large character of this reverend person: a particular relation of the several passages of his life, was not so proper for the pulpit, and was therefore omitted; but when persons of a publick character have adorn'd their stations with uncommon lustre, when they have recommended religion by their lives as well as their doctrine, and have been distinguish'd by their gravity, wisdom, charity, and good conversation, it cannot be amiss to recommend their example to the world; it may encourage some of my brethren in the ministry to an holy imitation of this excellent person; it may direct private christians in the most proper method of walking with God through the world, and may serve to keep alive in the hearts of some, the memory of one *who once had the rule over them, and who spoke to them the word of God; whose faith they are to follow, considering the end of his conversation*: for these reasons I have been induced to collect, and put together the following Memoirs.

Mr. MATTHEW CLARKE, was descended of a reputable family in the county of *Salop*; his father was educated in the university

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of *Cambridge*, and took the degree of *M. A.* in *Trinity College*, of which he was afterwards chosen fellow; whilst he was there, he had the reputation of an indefatigable student, and was remarkable for his uncommon skill in the *Oriental Languages*. In the year 1657. he was presented to the living of *Narborough* in *Leicestershire*, by Mr. *Stratford* the patron, but resign'd it back into his hands, when the *Act of Uniformity* took place in the year 1662. his conscience not allowing him to comply with the terms of conformity which the law requir'd; but though he resign'd his living in the church, he could not satisfy himself to desert the sacred ministry to which he had devoted himself; he therefore preached to his friends in private houses, as often as he had opportunity, but the persecution growing hot, and many of the silenc'd ministers being imprison'd, he removed with his family from *Narborough* to a solitary house in *Leicester Forest*, with no other view but to cover himself from the violence of his adversaries; and here his only son *MATTHEW* was born, *Feb. 2. 1663-4*. The family continued in the forest, 'till the *five mile act* took place, which enacts, ' That no non-
' conforming teacher shall dwell, or come,
' unless upon the road, within five miles of any
' corporation, or any other place, where they had
' been ministers, or had preached after the act
' of oblivion, unless they would swear that it
' was not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever
' to take up arms against the king — and that
' they would not at any time endeavour any
' alteration

'alteration either in church or state': The penalty was forty pounds and six months imprisonment. Mr. *Clarke* being dissatisfy'd with this oath, remov'd his family to *Stoke Golding*, 'till the times were more favourable, and afterwards to *Little Bowden* near *Market Harborough*, where he gathered a congregation of protestant dissenters, amongst whom he laboured with great acceptance and usefulness above forty years; though such was the severity of the times, that this reverend gentleman who was universally beloved by the whole country, suffer'd imprisonment three several times for preaching, in *Leicester Jail*; and in the latter end of the reign of King *Charles II.* was prosecuted upon the act of twenty pounds a month, and his goods were seized for the payment.

But under all these disadvantages, Mr. *Clarke's* father took particular care of the education of his son, 'till he had lead him through the *learned languages*, and having observed in him an eager thirst after sacred knowledge, and some remarkable appearances of divine grace, he devoted him to the service of Christ in the ministry. This look'd like a divine impulse, and considering the times, was a noble act of faith: nor was the son's chearful compliance with his father's advice, less remarkable; who being encouraged by the example of *Moses*, chose rather to *suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*

He confesses in one of his *M. S.* papers now before me, that he had many anxious thoughts about this affair, which he kept within himself; he

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he apprehended that he must renounce all prospect of worldly advancement, and be debarred of some liberties which private christians might be indulged in ; but that which determin'd his resolution, and silenced all his objections was the powerful impresson of that word on his soul, *Dan.xii.3. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the sun for ever and ever.* Concerning the appearances of divine grace, in his own soul he expresses himself thus, that 'having
' had the advantage of a strict education, the
' principles of true religion were fix'd in his
' mind, before he was much expos'd to the
' temptations of the world ; that he was train'd
' up in the practice of the publick and private
' duties of religion ; and that if his parents at any
' time observ'd him to neglect his private devotions, they would tell him, that if he was
' prayerless, it was to be feared he was graceless : by these restraints he pass'd the time of his
' childhood and youth without any open offence, for which reason, says he, as it could
' not so evidently appear to others, when the
' time was that my heart first received an effectual turn by the almighty power of God, so
' neither was it so plain to my self, as if I had
' been called from among the chief of sinners.
' But there are two things from which I encourage my self, namely, that I have a dread
' and terror of committing any known sin, and
' a conscientious regard to all commanded
' duties, which at first might arise from a fear
' of disobliging my parents ; but now I trust
' they

‘ they are perform’d from a principle of love to
‘ God, and fear of offending him.

Tho’ no man was more free from hypocrisy
and dissimulation, yet was he very jealous of
himself for want of those remarkable *influences*
upon his mind, which some have experienced ;

‘ I believe scarce any (says he) have lain long-
‘ er under the dreadful fears of this sin, or felt
‘ more horrors from the apprehension of it.’

When he was first admitted to the communion
of the Lord’s-Supper in his father’s church, he
pray’d earnestly before hand, that he might not
be *an unworthy receiver*, and yet when he came
to the ordinance, he had such an awe upon his
spirits, that he was almost afraid to *receive* :
such was the religious tenderness of his mind.

While Mr. *Clarke* liv’d in his father’s house,
in company with some other young gentlemen
design’d for the *ministry* who boarded there,
he made himself master of the *Latin*, *Greek*,
and several of the *oriental* languages, to which
he afterwards added the *Italian* and *French*,
the latter of which he spoke and writ with un-
common fluency and exactness. Being fit for
the university, and his dear mother dying about
that time, his father sent him into *Shrop-*
shire, and placed him under the care of
the reverend and learn’d Mr. *Woodhouse*, a fa-
mous tutor in those times ; with whom he
went through the other preparatory studies for
the ministry, but to perfect him for the pulpit
after all this, he came to *London* for the be-
nefit of conversing with learn’d men, and of
forming himself upon the model of the most
celebrated

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celebrated preachers. Here he continued near two years, and joyned in communion with the church under the pastoral care of the reverend Mr. G. Griffith.

At length he returned into *Leicestershire*, with a resolution to enter upon his ministerial work, but before he began, he settled an acquaintance and conversation with the most experienced christians in the country, he visited those who were under religious impressions, assisted them in prayer, and observed the various manner of the operation of the divine spirit in the conversion of souls; it was then observed that he had a very serious spirit, that he was humble and prudent above his years, and his courteous behaviour towards the meaner sort of people gained him the affections of all his father's friends and acquaintance.

He began his ministry in the year 1684. a time of as great severity against *Protestant Dissenters*, as had been known since the *Restoration* of King *Charles*; his first sermon was from those words of the Apostle *Paul*: *By the grace of God, I am what I am*. At his first appearing in publick, he met with great acceptance, large additions were made to his father's church while he was with him, and when he was present at the declarations which were made by the *new converts*, of the powerful impressions they had receiv'd under his ministry; O! how would he humble and abase himself before God in prayer, and set the crown of his success upon the head of free grace.

When the *Penal Laws* were suspended, and he had liberty to preach in publick, his fame quickly spread over the whole country; novelty drew many to hear him, and those whose prejudices were invincible could not but admire his great abilities, and decent behaviour in the pulpit. Strong impressions were made upon great numbers of the country people by his sermons, and there are some yet alive who will be *his crown and rejoycing in the day of account*; he awaken'd in the *ignorant* an hunger and thirst after the word of God, and laid the foundation of several societies of *Protestant Dissenters*, which have since been improved by the entrance of others into his labours. Thus did our young divine employ the first three years of his ministry.

The people were very desirous of his continuance in those parts; but coming to *London* in the year 1687. his friends perswaded him to supply the congregation at *Sandwich* in *Kent*, for a few Lord's-days: This was the church of which the late reverend Mr. *Pomfret* had been pastor, till being imprison'd for preaching he made his escape, and fled the country in disguise; when Mr. *Clarke* had been with them a month or six weeks, they express'd such an esteem for his ministry, and used such arguments, as detain'd him among them two years, and nothing but his father's pressing importunities prevail'd with them to give up their interest in him at last. Here his labours were very successful, and as I have been lately informed from thence, he

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he left behind him a name, and memorial not forgotten to this day.

In the year 1689. he return'd to *London*, where there was a great demand for young ministers at that time ; those who had been silenced, were either dead, or grown very old, and few had been educated with a view to the sacred ministry among *Protestant Dissenters* in the late times: Besides the *rights* of the church of *England* having been notoriously invaded by popish counsels, there was a disposition in the people to favour the *Dissenters*, which filled their congregations, and obliged them to press into the service of the city, such young candidates as might be an ornament to religion, and a support to the interest. It might truly be said of this time, *the harvest was great, and faithful labourers were but few* ; but God was mercifully pleased to lengthen the days of our fathers, 'till their children were fit to fill up their places.

I have reason to believe, Mr. *Clarke* had no intention to settle in *London* at this time ; for when he had been there but a few weeks, he return'd to his father, and accepted of the choice of the church to be his assistant ; but having preached to the reverend Mr. *Ford's* congregation in *Mil-s-Lane*, they conceiv'd such great expectations from him, that they sent him an unanimous invitation to assist their aged pastor, and used such arguments and intreaties, as prevail'd with his father and himself to consent ; but being a member of the church at *Harborough*, and their assistant, he would not conclude

to leave them absolutely without their allowance : the church was unwilling to part with him, and us'd their best endeavours to detain him, but being at length satisfy'd with the call of divine providence, they consented to his removal ; I have now before me the letter of the church of *Harborough*, to the reverend Mr. *Ford*, and the church of Christ, over which he was over-seer, sign'd by *Matthew Clarke*, Sen. and nineteen of the brethren, with the consent of the rest, setting him free from his relation to them, and expressing their acquiescing in his settling with Mr. *Ford*.

Mr. *Clarke* came to *London* under great disadvantages, for his friends had not a pulpit to give him, for so much as one part of the Lord's-day : Mr. *Barker* preaching in the morning, and Mr. *Ford* being to officiate as often as his health would admit, in the afternoon ; to supply this defect, he set up an evening lecture, which was very much frequented ; and prov'd a young nursery to the congregation, besides, Mr. *Ford's* church and auditory were reduced so low, that they could not raise an additional maintenance sufficient for a single person, which they were almost ashamed to acquaint Mr. *Clarke* with, but they were surpris'd with his humble and modest reply, which was to this purpose :
' that he had cast himself upon the providence
' of God, which had always provided well for
' him ; therefore as he had no reason to que-
' stion their doing for him according to their
' abilities, he should be satisfy'd with the will of
' God

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‘ God, and be content to fare as God should bless
‘ them together’. Thus he left his friends in
Leicestershire, and entred upon that province
which he adorn’d with uncommon reputation
to his death.

It was sometime before the providence of
God smiled upon this undertaking, for though
the reverend Mr. *Ford* was in the decline of life,
he was unwilling to be thought to have out-
lived his usefulness, and therefore filled the pul-
pit oftner than was desired; this hindred the in-
crease of the auditory, and together with some
other unkindnesses which Mr. *Clarke* met with,
laid him under great discouragements, till at
length it was agreed with Mr. *Ford*’s consent to
choose him co-pastor, and admit him to stated
service every other Lord’s-day, and at other
times when Mr. *Ford* was disabled.

About this time he was solemnly ordained
to the pastoral office with imposition of the
hands of several ministers, among whom were
the reverend Mr. *Ford*, Mr. *Griffith*, and
Mr. *Barker*, concerning which he writes thus;
‘ This is a day not to be forgotten for ever,
‘ when I was called to the pastoral office,
‘ and solemnly set apart with imposition of the
‘ hands, and prayer of the elders of neighbour-
‘ ing churches; blessed be God that has accepted
‘ of such a poor unworthy worm, and has pro-
‘ vided a *vineyard* for me to labour in. O
‘ that I may be help’d to labour success-
‘ fully!’

But

But further to discover the frame of his own spirit, and to lay himself under the most solemn obligations of duty and obedience to Christ; a few days before his separation to the pastoral office, he set apart some time to make a thorough search into his heart, humbly to make confession of his sins, and to beg a blessing on his future services for the church of Christ; having done this, he entred into a most solemn *covenant* with God; the reasons which induced him to this, together with the covenant it self, written and subscribed with his own hand are now before me, and I shall transcribe them entire for the benefit of the reader.

‘ Some reasons which induced me to enter
‘ into a more exprefs *covenant* with the Lord.

‘ That I ought to enter into *covenant* with the
‘ Lord, and give up my self body and soul
‘ to be at his disposal, appears,

‘ First, Because he is my great benefactor,
‘ and therefore deserves this; yea, more than
‘ this at my hands.

‘ The FATHER is my *Creator*, and has
‘ given me a being; he is my *preserver* and
‘ upholds my being.

‘ The SON is my Saviour and *Redeemer*;
‘ and if Christ has died for me, how reasonable
‘ is it that I should live to him?

‘ The blessed SPIRIT is my *sanctifier*,
‘ the great agent in applying the death of my
‘ Redeemer to my soul, without which I should
‘ never receive any saving benefit by it.

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‘ This glorious ELOHIM is my Lord, my
‘ God, and my judge. My life, health, ways,
‘ and all my concerns are in his hands; the
‘ enjoyment of whom is my only happiness,
‘ and a separation from whom will render me
‘ for ever miserable.

‘ In point of *gratitude* then, I am obliged
‘ to give up and dedicate my self, and all that I
‘ am, and have, to this great J E H O V A H,
‘ and in no better way am I able ever to ex-
‘ press my thankfulness, or testify my obedience
‘ to his will.

‘ Secondly, The religion which I profess, as
‘ I was in my infancy baptized into the chri-
‘ stian faith, and then by my parents dedicated
‘ to the Lord, calls me hereunto. It is my
‘ comfort that I had so early a *dedication*,
‘ and did then in my *parents* take the Lord
‘ for my God, and promised to become his;
‘ shall I rescind what was then done? My
‘ baptismal vow is upon me, which I am un-
‘ der a strict obligation to perform.

‘ Thirdly, The manifold mercies my graci-
‘ ous God has bestowed on me ever since,
‘ bring me under a farther obligation hereun-
‘ to. And oh what shall I render to God for
‘ so many undeserved mercies! can I ever
‘ enough requite him for so many benefits, shall
‘ I give less than my whole self? This is due,
‘ and all I am able to give besides. The best
‘ requital I can make is an entire resignation of
‘ my self to him, to be obedient to his laws,
‘ and subject to his disposal.

‘ This

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‘ This *covenant* and *self-resignation* to God
‘ I desire may be express, committed to writing,
‘ and signed by my own hand: Because,

‘ First, I do hope through divine assistance
‘ it may be a great means to recover me from
‘ under spiritual declensions and backslidings.

‘ Secondly, It may be a great preservative
‘ against a sinful compliance with Temptations.
‘ Shall I do any thing contrary to the solemn a-
‘ greement, to which in the presence of God I
‘ have set my hand? The more *explicite*, I con-
‘ ceive, the greater impression it will leave on
‘ my heart and life.

‘ Thirdly, This may be a good evidence to
‘ me in a time of darkness and temptation, and
‘ under spiritual desertion. I may have recourse
‘ to this, as what upon mature deliberation, and
‘ as my free and voluntary act I did, I hope with-
‘ out reserve in the presence of God.

‘ Seeing therefore my obligations to this
‘ work are so manifold, and the advantage by
‘ it will be so great, I purpose and resolve to
‘ give up, dedicate, resign, and devote my self
‘ to the *Lord* to be his servant, and withal, to
‘ take, accept of, and receive him to be my
‘ *God* and *Portion* in the manner following,

‘ The COVENANT between GOD
‘ and MY SOUL, renew’d, confirmed, and
‘ sign’d, *April 30. 1692.*

‘ O most dreadful and glorious God! thou
‘ who searchest the heart, and triest the reins
‘ of every man, before whom all things are
‘ naked, open and plain; I do at this time hum-
‘ bly acknowledge, that I am both by nature

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‘ and practice a great and vile sinner ; I have fallen from thee by mine iniquity ; I am by nature a child of wrath, and an heir of hell ; obnoxious to thy displeasure, and worthy of eternal misery. But O thou most gracious and merciful God ! I beseech thee accept of a poor returning *prodigal*, who now humbly prostrates himself at thy Foot. Thou hast commanded sinners to return to thee with all their heart, and hast assured them they shall find mercy with thee, in and through Christ. According to thy command and in obedience to thy call, I now come, and hope, do earnestly desire to take the Lord for my God, throw down my weapons, and yeild my self wholly up unto thee.

‘ I do therefore in thy presence, renounce all trust and confidence in my own *righteousness*, accounting it but as a filthy rag, or an unclean thing, acknowledging that of my self I am undone.

‘ I do here also, I hope, *sincerely* and from the bottom of my heart, put away all my *Idols*, firmly covenanting, and solemnly engaging, not to allow my self in any known sin, but conscientiously to use all appointed means for the utter destruction of sin and corruption.

‘ I do now with shame and grief of heart, acknowledge my pursuit of earthly things has been *inordinate*, but I do here unfeignedly desire, *that grace* from thee, whereby I may be enabled to watch against all temptations, arising either from prosperity or adversity, whereby my heart may be drawn away from

‘ thee,

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‘ thee, and do through grace engage my self to
‘ forsake and part with all that is dear to me,
‘ rather than turn from thee.

‘ And whereas of thine infinite and bound-
‘ less mercy, thou hast commanded me a wretch-
‘ ed *prodigal*, to return, and hast made offers
‘ of being *my God* again, through Christ, up-
‘ on my so doing.

‘ Encouraged hereby, I call heaven and
‘ earth to witness, that I do most solemnly,
‘ and I hope without reserve, avouch thee O JE-
‘ HOVAH! *Father, Son and eternal Spirit*,
‘ for the Lord my God, for my *portion* and
‘ chief *good*; and do on the other hand, so-
‘ lemnly give and resign up my self, body and
‘ soul, to be thy *servant*, engaging and promising
‘ through grace, that *I will serve thee in holi-
‘ ness and righteousness all the days of my life.*

‘ I do here also receive, and accept the
‘ *Lord Jesus Christ* as the only way to the
‘ *Father*, in whom alone I expect accept-
‘ ance with thee, and to whom I therefore
‘ joyn my self in a perpetual marriage *cove-
‘ nant.*

‘ I come to thee, BLESSED JESUS,
‘ poor, miserable, blind and naked as I am;
‘ I accept of thee for my prophet, priest, and
‘ king, I take thee for my head and husband, I
‘ renounce my own *righteousness*, and trust in
‘ *thine* alone, receiving thee for the LORD
‘ MY RIGHTEOUSNESS.

‘ I come to thee also BLESSED SPI-
‘ RIT, who art the sanctifier of God’s elect,
‘ renouncing my own *wisdom*, and taking thee

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‘ for my guide through this sinful world, co-
‘ venanting and engaging, that I will not do
‘ any thing through grace, which may be a grief
‘ unto thee; that I will not stifle thy Convict-
‘ ions, quench thy motions, or resist thine o-
‘ perations, nor will I allow my self in evil
‘ communication or corrupt discourse.

‘ I do here moreover, *promise* and *engage*,
‘ that through grace, I will rather patiently
‘ and chearfully suffer, than basely and coward-
‘ ly deny thee when called thereto; and do
‘ verily hope that neither *life* nor *death* shall
‘ part us.

‘ I do *promise* also and *resolve*, to put my
‘ neck under thy *yoke*, subscribing to all thy
‘ laws as holy, just, and righteous, and will
‘ through grace, take them as the rule of my
‘ thoughts, words and actions, and though the
‘ flesh may contradict and rebell, yet I will en-
‘ deavour to order my whole course according
‘ to thy direction.

‘ And whereas before this express and so-
‘ lemn *covenanting*, I do acknowledge with
‘ great self abhorrence, that I fell under many
‘ sad and woful *spiritual declensions*, being
‘ very remiss in duty, and careless in my walk-
‘ ing; I do here promise and engage, through
‘ grace, that I will make more conscience of
‘ duty, hitherto very much neglected, or care-
‘ lessly perform’d, that I will walk more closely
‘ with God, setting apart *time* for self exa-
‘ mination and soul humiliation, and will
‘ more diligently observe the *frame* of my
‘ heart, and *course* of my life.

‘ But

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‘ But because, O LORD! through frailty,
‘ I am subject to many failings, I am humbly
‘ bold to say, that miscarriages contrary to the
‘ bent and inclination of my heart, shall not
‘ make void this *covenant*.

‘ And now, O THOU ALL-SEEING
‘ AND OMNIPOTENT GOD! I do
‘ humbly hope I may appeal to thee, that I
‘ make *this covenant* this day, without re-
‘ serve or guile; if otherwise, I earnestly beg
‘ thou would’st discover to me any flaw or mis-
‘ carriage thou seest in me, and help me to
‘ do it aright, that my *hand* and *heart* may
‘ both go together.

‘ From *this day* then and *forward*, I shall
‘ be bold to call thee, and look on thee as
‘ *my God* and *my Father*. And thou O GOD,
‘ *Father Son* and *Spirit*, art become my *cove-*
‘ *nant friend*, and I am become thy *covenant*
‘ *servant*. A MEN, A MEN. And so I sub-
‘ scribe my self,

April 30. 1692,

Matthew Clarke.

Two years after this, *viz.* 1694. the Re-
verend and aged Mr. *Ford* died. He was the
ejected minister of *Chippingnorton* in *Oxford-*
shire, and afterwards pastor of a congregation of
Protestant Dissenters in that place, where he
was well beloved, and his labours had been
very successful; but upon his leaving his
church, the interest of Christ in that town
visibly declin’d, and the church to which he

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came, sunk considerably under his administration : from the time of his death Mr. *Clarke* succeeded him in the whole of his work, and within a year or two his auditory was crouded; vast additions were made to the church, I my self have been witness to seven or eight receiv'd in a month; *so mightily grew the word of God and prevail'd.*

In the year 1696. the providence of God directed Mr. *Clarke* to a very virtuous and agreeable gentlewoman for his wife Mrs. *Anne Frith*, daughter of Mr. *Robert Frith*, of *Windsor*, of which corporation he had been often Mayor; by her he has left behind him a son and a daughter, both grown to years of maturity before their father's death, who took pleasure in giving them all the advantages of a liberal education, and observ'd with great satisfaction before his death, the happy improvements they had made: there could not be a more indulgent parent to his children, than Mr. *Clarke*, and 'tis hard to find in this corrupt age, children so affectionate and dutiful to a parent while he lived, and so sensibly afflicted with the loss they have sustain'd by his death.

There were great debates between the presbyterian and congregational divines at this time, about certain high points of doctrine, relating to the *imputation of the righteousness of Christ in our justification*, to the *gospel's being a new law*, and to a *change of persons between Christ and his Elect*, &c. which were managed with so much warmth, as to divide the lecturers at *Pinner's-hall*, and at length the whole

whole dissenting interest: from this time the two denominations of *Presbyterians* and *Independents* became distinct settlements, and managed their publick concerns apart, which in my opinion is so far from being prejudicial, that if they do but maintain a brotherly affection and correspondence, it may be more serviceable to the common interest. About a year or two forwards, three of the lecturers at *Pinner's hall* died within two months of each other, which made way for the choice of Mr. *Clarke*; this was in the year 1697. from which time we may reckon him fixt in the several parts of his publick work, in which he was employ'd with great reputation and usefulness to his death.

Having set Mr. *Clarke* in this publick view, it will be proper to consider his behaviour in the other relations of life.

His family was a well govern'd society, in which the worship of God, and social duties were regularly perform'd; his circumstances in the world were not large, yet he liv'd like a gentleman; his table was often spread for the entertainment of his poor brethren in the ministry and others, and he was continually ministering to their necessities. In this respect he answered the character which the apostle gives of a good bishop: He was *not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy and temperate*; no man of his profession had greater opportunities than himself, of making a large provision for his family, but he had an aversion to every thing

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thing that look'd like covetousness, and therefore chose rather to do honour to religion by living agreeably to his character and station.

In the affairs of his church which was numerous, and made up of persons of different tempers and dispositions, he managed with great prudence and discretion; discharging the office of a vigilant and faithful pastor, by publick instructions, and by an annual visitation of the families of his church as long as his health did permit. He was happy in composing differences, in calming the spirits of men, and in all church debates, he moderated with that wisdom and pacifick temper, as effectually gain'd the hearts of his people: for whatever misunderstandings might arise among them, they always paid a very great deference and regard to the counsels and advice of their excellent pastor.

But Mr. *Clarke's* influence was not confin'd within the narrow limits of his family and church, his cares extended to all the churches; he corresponded with his poor country brethren in several counties in *England*, and by his great interest in the city, collected large sums of money for their support, which he was careful should be distributed to the most necessitous and deserving: His heart was in this good work, and he would often bless God for the success of it; he was an original member of the *Society of Congregational Ministers, and gentlemen*, united for the support of the gospel in the country, and the welfare of it was upon his heart when he left the world; for the very last sermon he preached in his own pulpit, was an exhortation

to

the Rev. Mr. Matth. Clarke. xxvii

to his people to continue their encouragement of it, by a liberal contribution, which he receiv'd with great thankfulness and pleasure.

Many of the younger candidates for divinity, applied to him for direction in their studies, and attended his ministry to form themselves by so excellent a *model*, for if *Mr. Clarke* triumph'd any where, it was in the pulpit; his grave and majestick behaviour, his commanding voice, his agreeable pronounciation attended with a proper fervency of spirit, struck his audience with an awful reverence; his *subjects* were well chosen, and he spoke of the sublimest doctrines of our holy religion in an intelligible manner; having convinced the judgments of his hearers, he seldom fail'd of awakening their consciences, and touching their affections: Upon the whole, he was an admir'd preacher, and as worthy the imitation of those who would fill the pulpit in an acceptable and useful manner, as any one I ever knew.

While *Mr. Clarke* was in this high esteem among *Dissenters* of all denominations, he was profuse of his strength, and wasted his constitution, which appeared as yet strong and vigorous. Being at leisure one part of the Lord's-day, all the neighbouring congregations coveted his assistance, so that he usually preach'd twice or three times on the sabbath, and several times in the week, by which his blood was so heated, that by degrees he lost his natural appetite and rest; but the imprudence of this part of his conduct did not fully appear 'till the spring of the year 1707. when he had
some

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some symptoms of a violent cold, and obstruction upon his breast, which being neglected at first, in an intemperate season of the year got the better of his constitution, and produced at length a malignant fever, which was one and twenty days before it came to a crisis. He had the advice of the most eminent physicians of those times, but the distemper was too stubborn for their prescriptions; the whole mass of blood was corrupted, and all the pores of the body shut up: the application of blisters, fresh pigeons to the feet every twelve hours, and bottles of warm water under the arms, produced no secretion or discharge of nature, but the symptoms were every day more threatening, 'till the *physicians* declar'd they could do no more for him. His congregation and all his acquaintance were deeply affected with this providence, and in their distress, they sought unto the Lord; prayers and intercessions were made for him in his own meeting-place nine several days, to which most of the ministers in the city resorted, and I must confess I never was present at any solemnity of this nature, where there were such *strong cries and supplications offered up to Him that was able to deliver him from death*; and a congregation crouded with persons who were more in earnest, and seem'd to be met together with the resolution of *Jacob*, when he wrestled all night with the angel, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*. Mr. Clarke himself was not insensible of the danger of his case, and therefore while he had the use of his reason settled his worldly affairs; and having taken a solemn

solemn leave of his wife, who was dissolved in tears by his bed-side, he resign'd himself with an humble devotion to the will of God : when he was told that *prayers were made without ceasing by the church to God for him*, he expressed great satisfaction and thankfulness, and earnestly desired that some of his brethren might be admitted to pray with him, but the physicians forbid it, as long as they had any hopes of his recovery. At length when they apprehended him near his end, he was allow'd to do as he would; and being then ask'd who they should send for, to pray with him, he named the reverend Mr. *Watts*, who tells me he observ'd in him a sweet calmness and composure of mind, a firm and steady reliance upon the merits of Christ alone for his salvation, and an humble resignation of himself to the will of God for life or death. He then assisted him in his devotions, and as a person departing out of this world, recommended him to the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*. Tho' the physicians gave no hopes of his recovery, they continued to watch the distemper, that they might be ready to assist any efforts of nature, but when they apprehended the next *Paroxysm* would be his last, one proposed the *bark*, which the rest were afraid would hasten his end ; Others advised to the richest and highest cordial that could be prepared, which was order'd to be taken in a very large quantity, as the last assistance that could be given. When he had taken this medicine about a quarter of an hour he began to feel the effects of it,
and

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and lifting up his hands he said, *I am persuaded this medicine is from God.* From this time his fever abated, there appeared a separation in his blood, nature discharg'd it self by degrees of the distemper, and after some weeks he recover'd.

However, this severe fit of sickness shatter'd his constitution, for tho' he enjoy'd a pretty good state of health for some years after, he would frequently complain of disorders in his head, which at length turn'd to a gouty humour, and settled in his feet. It was a considerable time before he return'd to his work, but his church receiv'd him as *one risen from the dead*, and forasmuch as they apprehended his life was given them as an answer of prayer, they appointed a solemn day of thanksgiving for his recovery, *April 23. 1707.* when the reverend Mr. *Tong* preach'd from *Philip. ii. 27. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him;* after which Mr. *Clarke* with great humility and devotion first return'd thanks to God, and then acknowledged with all affection and gratitude his obligations to his brethren, who had wrestled with God for so unworthy a life; assuring them it should be devoted (as God should assist him) to Christ's and the church's service; The first time he appear'd in the pulpit, he preach'd a most affecting sermon from *Psalms cxviii. 18. The Lord has chastened me sore, but has not given me over to death;* in which he express'd the thoughts of his heart upon his sick-bed in these words: ' I had the sentence of death
' within

‘ within my self, and concluded, that I was de-
‘ priv’d of the residue of my years, and
‘ should see the Lord no more in the land of
‘ the living; but under these apprehensions, I
‘ had some good hope through grace that I
‘ should see, and enjoy him in the other and
‘ better world; having committed my soul in-
‘ to the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, I was
‘ persuaded he would present it to the Father
‘ without spot and blemish. Though I had
‘ not those raptures which some have experienc’d
‘ upon a death bed, yet I had so much faith as
‘ enabled me to stay my self upon God, trust-
‘ ing in the righteousness of my glorious Re-
‘ deemer. When I was free from those con-
‘ fusions and disorders which the violence of
‘ my distemper brought upon me, I did not
‘ allow my self to speak or think hardly of God,
‘ but was enabled to acquiesce in his sovereign
‘ pleasure, saying, *If the Lord has any*
‘ *further service for me, he will bring me*
‘ *back unto his house, but if he has no*
‘ *further pleasure in me, here I am, let him*
‘ *do as seems good in his sight.*’ And so
lasting were the impressions which this pro-
vidence made upon him, that he took notice
of the anniversary return of it, in his family
devotions as long as he lived.

When Mr. *Clarke* returned to his work, he
abated nothing of his former labours, but
preach’d as frequently as before. And being
persuaded that his own life was an answer
of prayer, he was always ready to assist on the
like

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like occasions, and when he was called upon to pray for the lives of useful persons, or the welfare of private families, he would fill his mouth with arguments, and with a rich variety of expression, spread the case before the Lord. He pray'd and preach'd his own experience, and his labours were bless'd to the conversion of many, who from time to time were added to the church.

In the year 1708. the nation had an unspeakable loss in the death of his Royal Highness *George*, Prince of *Denmark*, whose powerful influence over his Royal Consort *Queen Anne*, was not discover'd 'till some time after his death, when Her Majesty gave into measures apparently prejudicial to the interests of her people, and of the Protestant Succession. Addresses of condolence were sent up from all parts of the kingdom upon this occasion, and the *Protestant Dissenters* deputed *Mr. Clarke* to wait on the Queen in their name, who was receiv'd alone in the royal closet, cloath'd with mourning suitably to the solemn occasion.

After this, his reputation and usefulness in the city increased for about seven years, 'till another melancholy providence besel him; for in the month of *November* 1715. as he was returning home out of *Southwark* where he had been to visit a friend, his foot slip'd over against the church in *Tooly-street*, and one of his legs bending under him, both the bones of it snapt asunder; he was immediately
lifted

lifted into a coach and came home in it alone, to the surprize of his family ; the bones were set by skilful surgeons, and healed in the usual time without any remarkable accident, but being obliged to keep his bed for a month or six weeks, his constitution was weakned, and tho' he retir'd into the country to recover his strength, and was entertain'd with chearfulness at the country seats of several of his friends in the neighbouring villages of the city ; his spirits were apparently depress'd, nor did they ever recover their briskness and vivacity as before.

At his first appearance in the pulpit after this providence, he preached from *Isa.* xxxviii. 17. *Behold, for peace I had great bitterness, but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.*

Hitherto Mr. Clarke had preached but one part of the Lord's-day in his own pulpit, but the church which assembled there in the morning removing to another place, the whole service devolved upon him ; this was the society which had been for many years under the pastoral care of the reverend Mr. *Matthew Barker*, the ejected minister of *St. Leonard Eastcheap*, a person, says Dr. *Calamy*, of considerable learning, great piety and universal candor and moderation. After his death they chose the reverend Mr. *Short* to succeed him, a person no less considerable for his learning, piety, and sound judgment than his predecessor, but having an impediment in his utterance, he could not be heard with pleasure in the
b pulpit,

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pulpit, so that the church sunk under his administration, and at his death, which was about the year 1718. dissolved into other societies.

Upon Mr. *Short's* removal, Mr. *Clarke* filled his own pulpit himself twice every Lord's-day, to the manifest impairing of his constitution, for instead of regular fits of the gout in his feet, which he used to have once a year, the humours began now to float into the nobler parts, and affect his head and stomach; he lost his appetite, abated in his flesh, and tho' his legs would sometimes swell, yet it was not in the power of medicine to throw off the gouty humour into the extream parts as formerly.

His church thought it now high time to provide him an assistant; for this purpose they consulted often together, and ask'd wisdom of God, and at length with the approbation of their reverend pastor, they chose with great unanimity Mr. *Timothy Jolly*, of *Sheffield*, son of the reverend and learned Mr. *Jolly* of *Attercliffe*, a famous tutor in those parts for many years; this gentleman lived in great friendship with Mr. *Clarke* for six years, reverencing him as a father, and endeavouring to form his method and manner of preaching according to the excellent model that was before him: Upon Mr. *Clarke's* death the majority of the church chose Mr. *Jolly* his successor, who after some time was separated to the pastoral office with great solemnity, in the presence of a numerous congregation; but a
confi-

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considerable number being dissatisfy'd with the choice, have since withdrawn, and form'd themselves into a separate society.

But to return to Mr. *Clarke*, the assistance which his church had given him, was not of that service to him as it might have been, if he could have been persuaded to resist the importunity of his friends, who were pressing him into their service upon every occasion, but this was so contrary to his inclinations, that he would chide with those that would hinder him in his work. Instead of abating his labours, he accepted this very year 1719, of a choice to a new lecture, at the reverend Mr. *Earl's* meeting place in *Hanover street*, to be carried on by himself and five of his brethren, on *Thursday* mornings, for the service of that end of the town. Here he gained new reputation, and spread his character into those parts of *London* and *Westminster*, where it was not so well known before.

In the year 1722. he was chosen again to appear at the head of the *Protestant Dissenters* with an address; congratulating His Majesty upon the discovery of a plot, to disturb the peace of his government, by bringing in a *Popish Pretender*, and assuring him of the unshaken loyalty of His *Protestant Dissenting Subjects*, to His Person and Government.

But there was something which by the divine permission sat very heavy upon Mr *Clarke's* mind all this time, and contributed very much to the

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impairing his health, and that was a deep concern for the unhappy divisions among his brethren, occasion'd by their assembling at *Salters-hall*, to consult about *advices for peace*, to be sent into the *West-country*, where the harmony of the churches was disturbed by the revival of some disputes relating to the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. When the *London* ministers came together, it was debated, whether they ought not first to make a declaration of their own faith *in that article*, before they gave advices to their brethren; this was oppos'd by many, as foreign to the design of the *Assembly*, and as that which might possibly lay the foundation of a division among themselves; and upon the question, it was carried by a small majority in the negative. But the brethren on the other side of the question, thought this an affair of such consequence, that they came to the next *Session of the Assembly*, determin'd to recal the former question, and if the majority did not consent, then to invite as many as would join with them, to subscribe the *first article* of the *Church of England*, and the answers to the *fifth and sixth questions* of the *Assemblies Catechism*, as a test of their agreement in this article of faith. I forbear to relate the warmth and passion of that day, which prevail'd with some of the brethren to withdraw from so much noise and clamour, and unhappily divided the rest by the names of *Subscribers* and *Non-subscribers*: Mr. *Clarke* divided with those who were for subscribing the articles, and after the
breaking

breaking up of the assembly thought it his duty to confirm the faith of his people in the important doctrine of the eternal Deity of our Blessed Saviour, by preaching on the subject; as did most of the *Dissenting Ministers* of *London* of all denominations about that time. But when he had done this, he durst not allow himself to suspect those of heresy or lukewarmness in the faith, who had no other difference with him, but about the expediency of subscribing at that time; he was therefore free to join with those of either party, whom he had reason to believe sound in the faith, upon all opportunities of worship, but this *christian temper* gave occasion to others of a warmer spirit to spread reports to his disadvantage, insomuch that those to whom he had once been a *father*, would now hardly condescend to own him for a *brother*. Had he been in perfect health, he would have neglected these things; but being advanced in years, and depress'd in his spirits, they filled his heart with the deepest concern: He mourn'd over the unhappy state of the dissenting interest; he lamented their divisions in publick and private, he pray'd earnestly that God would pour out a better spirit upon the contending parties. And when he found he could do little service by his persuasions, he withdrew very much from publick conversation, resolving to spend the short remainder of his days in silence and solitude.

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We have now brought our Reverend Father to the last stage of his life ; he had spent some weeks of the spring before he died with his intimate friend Mr. *Coward*, of *Walthamstow*, from thence he removed about *Midsummer* to *Tooting* in *Surry*, where he was first seized with an asthmatick disorder, which by the application of proper medicines was quickly removed, and he continued pretty well the remaining part of the summer, but being obliged to return to the same place in the *dead* of the following winter, on account of the death of the reverend Mr. *Freeman*, he was seized with the gout in his stomach and head ; he lost his senses for a short time, his complexion changed *yellow*, and his asthma return'd with more violence : from this time he had strong apprehensions of his approaching end, for though his friends encouraged him, and the physicians did every thing they could to support him, yet he felt such an inward decay of nature and failure of spirits, as no medicine could reach. He never recovered his complexion, nor could the physicians get the gout into his feet ; however he continued preaching even when he had the greatest difficulty to get into the pulpit, and some of his last sermons which he preach'd with a view to his own case, from *Psal. xciv.*
19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul, were in the opinion of some very good judges, among the best they had ever heard.

About

the Rev. Mr. Matth. Clarke. xxxix

About the middle of *February*, he went with his family to *Stoke Newington* for the benefit of the air and exercise; and rid out as often as the weather would admit. Here I visited him, and observ'd that he endeavour'd to be chearful for the entertainment of his friends, though his spirits and strength were exhausted; when we were alone, he open'd his heart, wounded with the divisions among his *brethren*, which he was satisfy'd, without some remarkable appearance of God, would end in the loss of the vital power of religion from among them, the glorious spirit of God in his converting and sanctifying operations being already in a great measure departed from their assemblies.—*But*, says he, *I shall shortly be out of the way.* — *I am not far from the place where the weary are at rest.* This was the last conversation I had with him, for a few days after, the humours which had already filled his legs, and floated about his body in different shapes and forms seiz'd his *vitals*, and put an end to his life in three days. He had been very chearful on *Wednesday* evening, and pray'd in his family with unusual fervour and devotion; but about five a clock on *Thursday* morning, he awaked with a complaint of a rising in his throat, which upon taking something, was removed. About seven it return'd again, and though he endeavour'd to discharge his stomach, he could bring off nothing, but in a moment was depriv'd of his speech; this alarm'd his wife and the whole family, who were dissolv'd in tears. They brought him immediately in a

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coach to *London*, and when he enter'd his own house, he was sensible, and seem'd to be well pleased that he was at home. A few hours after he was in bed, he lost the use of one side of his body, and the next day fell into a kind of lethargy, in which he continued 'till about eight a clock on the Lord's-day morning, when his pacifick soul ascended to his great Redeemer, *March 27. 1726.* after he had liv'd sixty two years, seven weeks and two days.

This was the end of this laborious and faithful servant of Christ Mr. *MATTHEW CLARKE*; he was a comely person, something taller than the middle size, and of proportionable bulk; he had a grave and venerable aspect, his features were strong and masculine, he had a piercing eye, and always an agreeable smile in his face. The gentleman and the christian met in him: he was courteous and affable to all men, chearful and pleasant in conversation, in which there was something so useful and entertaining, as made his company acceptable to all his acquaintance. He was a person of great integrity of life and manners; humble and modest even to a fault, and in the latter part of his life timorous and diffident of himself, which was his greatest *foible*. He went through the world in a most inoffensive manner, without the least blemish upon his moral character, having as many friends, and as few enemies as any man of his profession. His ministerial usefulness continued to the very last, and though the croud of business which
was

the Rev Mr. Matth. Clarke. xli

was always upon his hands, together with his natural modesty and diffidence, would not allow him to transmit his own name down to posterity, yet all that were acquainted with him will agree, that he deserves to be ranked among the best and most useful *divines* of his age.

The *remains* of this excellent person were deposited in a vault at the east end of the burying place of *Protestant Dissenters*, in *Bunhill-fields*; his funeral, though designed to be private, was attended by many of his brethren in the ministry, and great numbers of his friends and acquaintance. Over the vault there is erected a neat and decent monument at the expence of his church, with an inscription in *latin*, composed by the reverend and ingenious Mr. *Isaac Watts*, which for the benefit of the *english* reader, he has now been so kind as to translate into our own language.

The latin inscription transcribed exactly from the Tomb-stone, is inserted in the next page for the satisfaction of those who understand that language.

The *english* reader will then be entertain'd with the ingenious author's translation of it, and will be pleas'd with reading in a few lines an exact and comprehensive character of the excellent Mr. *Clarke*, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches.

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M. S.

In hoc Sepulchro conditur

MATTHÆUS CLARKE,

Patris venerandi Filius cognominis,
nec ipse minus venerandus :

Literis sacris et humanis

à primâ ætate innutritus :

Linguarum scientissimus :

In Munere Concionatorio

eximius, operosus et felix :

In officio Pastoralis

fidelis et vigilans :

Inter Theologorum Dissidia

moderatus et pacificus :

Ad omnia Pietatis munia

promptus semper et alacris :

Conjux, Frater, Pater, Amicus,

inter præstantissimos :

Erga omnes hominum ordines

egregiè benevolus.

Quas verò innumeras invicta modestia dotes

Celavit, nec Fama profert, nec copia fandi

Est Tumulo concessa: sed olim Marmore rupto

Ostendet ventura Dies; Præconia Cœli

Narrabunt; Judex agnoscat, & Omnia plaudent,

Abi, Viator; ubicunque terrarum fueris,

hæc audies.

Natus est agro *Leicestriensi* A. D. 1664.

Obiit *Londini* 27^o die Martii, 1726.

Ætat. Sux 62.

Multum dilectus, multum desideratus.

SACRED

the Rev. Mr. Matth. Clarke. xliii

THE TRANSLATION,

SACRED TO MEMORY.

In this Sepulchre lyes buried

MATTHEW CLARKE

*A Son bearing the Name of
of his venerable Father,
nor less venerable Himself.*

*Train'd up from his youngest years
in sacred and humane Learning*

Very skillful in the Languages :

*In the Gift of Preaching
excellent, laborious and successful :*

*In the Pastoral Office
Faithful and vigilant :*

*Among the Controversies of Divines
Moderate always and pacifick :*

Ever ready for all the Duties of Piety :

*Among Husbands, Brothers, Fathers, Friends,
he had few Equals :*

*And his Carriage toward all Mankind was
eminently Benevolent.*

*But what rich Stores of Grace lay hid behind
The veil of Modesty, no human Mind*

Can

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*Can search, no Friend declare, nor Fame reveal,
Nor has this mournful Marble power to tell.
Yet there's a hastning Hour, it comes, it comes,
To rouse the Sleeping Dead, to burst the Tombs,
And set the Saint in view. All Eyes behold,
While the vast Records of the Skies unroll'd
Rehearse his Works, and spread his Worth abroad;
The Judge approves, and Heav'n and Earth
applaud.*

*Go, Traveller, and whereso'er
Thy wandering Feet shall rest
In distant Lands, thy Ear shall hear
His Name pronounc'd and blest.*

He was born in *Leicestershire* in the year 1664.

He dyed at *London* March 27. 1726.

Aged Sixty two years,
Much beloved, and much lamented.





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my servant the BRANCH.*

*For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua:
Upon one stone shall be seven eyes, behold I will
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The Gospel Invitation. Preached at the Reverend
Mr. *Earl's*.

L U K E xiv. 23.

*And compel them to come in, that my house may be
full* p. 339, 353, 365

S E R M O N XV.

Preached by Mr. *Neal*, at Mr. *Clarke's* Funeral.

M A T T H. xxv. 21.

*His Lord said unto him, Well done thou good and
faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few
things, I will make thee ruler over many things:
enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* p. 381

SERMON



A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D to the
S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners.

JULY 2, 1711.

Z E C H. III. 8, 9.

Hear now, O Joshua, the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee: For they are men wondered at: For behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.

For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon one stone shall be seven eyes, behold I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.



Doubt not but the worthy persons, who have so long appear'd in the glorious cause of Reformation, and for many years been lifting up a standard against the growing evils of the day; as they were at first convinc'd of the necessity and importance of such

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an undertaking, are now more than ever sensible of the difficulties which attend it, and I am afraid have found 'em greater than could once be imagin'd. Tho' you have with much pains and no small hazard, been striving against sin, and gain'd considerable advantage against the common enemy, yet must it be owned your endeavours have not met with altogether the wish'd for and desir'd success. There's but too much cause for the prophet's complaint, *the bellows are burn'd, the lead is consum'd, the founder melteth in vain, the wicked are not plucked away* (a). All the Iniquity of the land is not yet remov'd. There's a great deal of filth and rubbish still remaining to be taken away. *The wickedness of the wicked is far from being come to an end.* The Lusts of Men are too stubborn to be subdu'd without great opposition, and continu'd struggles. From all which it's evident, that how much soever has been already said and done, there is need still to animate and excite you to a diligent perseverance in this excellent design, and at the same time to afford you all possible assistance and encouragement therein, lest you be *wearied and faint in your minds.* This I apprehend is the principal part of the present day's work, and more especially aim'd at in these discourses. And tho' I am very sensible you have now pitch'd upon a most improper person for this service, yet since you have thought fit it should be so, I shall, without any farther apology, apply my self to the Business of the day, and (depending upon his help, *without whom we can do nothing*) discharge it in the best manner I can, by opening this passage of scripture, *Hear now, O Joshua, the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee, for they are men wonder'd at, &c. Joshua with his*

(a) Jer. 6. 29.

fellows, as the Prophet here tells us, were men wondered at, for the warmth of their zeal, and the boldness of their undertaking, that in the face of all discouragements, they resolve to build the holy city and the temple; and this vision is design'd on purpose to encourage them in their work, and fortifie their minds against all the opposition they might expect to meet with therein. For this end they are directed to the Messiah, here called the branch, in whose strength, and under whose influence they should be able to perform this and every other good work. He is here represented as having seven eyes to signifie the perfection of his wisdom; and by a stone to denote the greatness of his strength: which Interpretation is warranted by another prophecy, where the things here spoken of the branch, under mystical tho' significant types and emblems, are said of him without a parable in the plainest and most expresse terms, and may serve for a comment upon the text, *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots (a). And the spirit of the LORD shall be upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD: And as this is a mighty commendation of the branch, so was it a great encouragement to the faith of his people. This design would fail under their hands, should it be left entirely to their management; therefore, Behold says God, I bring forth my servant the branch, who shall be your instructor and counsellor your strength and support, your assistant and comforter therein; and what he was to them, the same he will be to all that are their companions in the like religious design.*

The Gentlemen of this society are not indeed their companions in building a material temple, but

(a) Isa. 11. 1, 2.

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may be said properly enough to be employ'd in a design of something the like nature. Your work is to build up the interests of religion, and to promote the honour and worship of God amongst us, so far as your influence and endeavours can extend. And like them you are, men wondered at by some, despis'd, oppos'd and contradicted by others. But be of good courage; Go on and build in the strength of the Lord. Fear not the face of man, where you may expect the presence of God. *Be strong, O ye people of the land, I am with you, saith the Lord (a),* is a promise you may as comfortably apply to your selves, as *Joshua* and his fellows did, to whom it was first made. And let this stir up your spirits, as it did theirs, *to work in the house of the Lord (b).*

The argument to enforce this exhortation may seem to lie out of the common road; But I am well satisfied you are in no danger of being led out of the way, when for your encouragement in this important service you are directed to him whom God has laid as the foundation and corner-stone of his church. It might then have been said, what's a promise of bringing forth the branch to the undertaking of *Joshua* and his companions, in building the temple? And the argument with reference to the present design may have the same appearance. What's a discourse of the Messiah to the work of reformation? To which I answer, much every way. For to whom can we more properly be directed in an undertaking which so much exceeds all humane strength and wisdom, than the stone upon which are seven eyes! And to whom can we so fitly look for encouragement in our endeavours to reform a sinful nation, as to him, who by the sacrifice of himself remov'd the iniquity of his land in one day? So that I cannot but think there's a great propriety

(a) Hag. 2. 4.

(b) Hag. 1. 13.

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and fuitableness in this argument to the present design, which I shall endeavour to evidence, in opening and improving the following Proposition, laid down as the scope and sum of the text, *viz.*

Observ. In every difficult undertaking for the service of God and the interests of religion, wherein we may be wondred at and opposed by others, we must derive our encouragements from him, who by one offering has taken away the iniquity of his people; and is endued with perfect wisdom and strength, for the enabling others as instruments, to promote the same blessed design.

This is not the first time the church of God had been relieved by a promise of the Messiah's incarnation and sacrifice, tho' some hundreds of years before his actual appearance in the world. See *Isa.* 7. 14. *Hag.* 2. 4, 5, 6, 7. By which we learn, That Christ was and is the substance of the churches comfort and support in every age; he furnishes his people with wisdom, fills them with grace, and blesses them with success in every difficult duty. *Seven eyes* are here said to be upon *one stone*, i. e. say some, the eyes of all the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Evangelists and Apostles, and of the faithful in all times, were lifted up unto and intently fixed on the Messiah. In him they placed their trust and confidence; from him they deriv'd their supplies, and expected all their success. Now were the Fathers of old comforted in the faith and hope of the Messiah to come? Did they look unto him afar off, and were they lightned by that distant view, and shall not our eyes much more be lifted up unto the same Jesus, already come into the world, for light and life, wisdom, strength and success in every religious undertaking? The better to obtain this end, I shall here shew,

I. That we may be called unto and engaged in a work for the service of God, and the in-

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terests of religion, attended with many difficulties in itself, and much opposed by others.

II. Whenever we are so, our eyes must be up unto, and our encouragements derived from, Christ, the head and foundation of his church.

And having gone through these two heads, I shall close the whole with a suitable application. To begin with the first, *viz.*

I. We may be called unto and engaged in a work for God, of great difficulty in itself, and much opposed by others. So were *Joshua* and his companions in their day.

The Building of the Temple was,

1. A work of great difficulty in it self, especially considering the circumstances they were then under. Their condition at that time was upon many accounts very deplorable; they were lately come out of a long captivity, and were still under the power of those that once held them captives. The holy seed was miserably trampled on and abus'd. The marks of poverty and disgrace were still visible upon them, tho' the yoke of captivity was taken off their necks. How then shou'd this poor despised people be able to raise such a building as the temple out of its ruins? what heart cou'd they have to begin it? what hopes could they have to finish it? It was upon many accounts so unlikely, that others wonder'd at 'em for attempting it; which leads us further to observe, it was,

2. A work greatly opposed by others. There was an open door to build, and there were many adversaries.

Satan endeavour'd to provoke God against 'em, and make him their enemy. *He stood at the right hand of Joshua to resist them (a).*

His instruments hung upon the wheels, and made them drive heavily on. *The people of the land wea-*

(a) Zech. 3. 1.

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ken'd the hands of the people of Judah, and they troubled them in building: they hir'd counsellors against 'em to frustrate their purpose, and wrote letters against 'em to Artaxerxes (a), accusing them of sedition and rebellion, and mov'd for an order to stop their proceedings, whereby the work ceas'd for a time.

It's easie to observe how applicable this is, in several instances at least, to the present case; and I believe you could run the parallel in your own thoughts, as I have gone along. Like theirs, yours is,

1. A work of great difficulty. That it is for the service of God, and really design'd to promote the valuable interests of religion, I have no doubt; and that it's exceeding difficult and hazardous I believe you are very sensible. The many years experience you have had gives but too convincing proof of this. The reforming the lewd practices of a licentious age; and cleansing a polluted land from its abominable filth and impurities, is indeed an *Herculean* labour. It is no easie thing to cast out the strong man armed, who has so long enjoy'd an undisturbed possession. Evil and inveterate customs are not soon broken. They that have many years enjoy'd an uncontroul'd liberty, and sin'd by prescription, won't easily be prevail'd with to alter their course. It's hard to revive a long neglected work, and lay effectual restraints upon the lusts of men so much us'd to domineer. To this we may add, yours is,

2. A work much oppos'd by others. To say the least, like *Joshua* and his companions.

1. You are men wonder'd at. The worldly, prophane, unbelieving, ignorant sort of *Jews* wonder'd at them and their hopes; that they would attempt a work of so much labour and expence. In

(a) Ezra 4. 4, 5, 7.

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like manner, those that are themselves cold and luke-warm, wonder at your Zeal and forwardness; the fearful and unbelieving, at your courage and resolution; narrow, selfish spirits, who care not what becomes of the interests of God's church, if their own are secur'd, wonder at your piety and self-denial. Those that are weary, and draw back, at your constancy and perseverance. Such as are hardned in sin, and resolv'd upon their way, wonder at your insolence, as they call it, that you dare stop their career, and will not let them alone to take their course, tho' it be to affront their God, and undo themselves. In a word, many wonder you will give your selves so much trouble, encounter such difficulties, run such hazards, put your selves and others to so much expence, that you will venture the loss of livelihood, and even life it self, and thus expose your selves to be ruin'd and undone, if not murther'd— They wonder you will attempt to reform a Generation of Men that seem past cure, and whom you can have so little hopes of reclaiming.

But in reality the wonder may rather be turn'd upon themselves, That they can so tamely observe the vile affronts offer'd every day to the Majesty of Heaven, and behold men in droves running headlong to destruction, and do nothing, or next to nothing to prevent their ruin. It's matter of astonishment they can be content to sit still, and see the virtue of the nation lost, without endeavouring to recover it, and should be so unconcerned to prevent those judgements which we may justly fear our provoking crimes are pulling down upon our heads: God himself observ'd this with wonder, *I saw that there was no man, and wondered there was no intercessour (a).*

(a) Isa. 59. 16.

A Reformation Sermon. 9

But to return; you are, like them,

2. Men despised and insulted. If some wondred at *Jeshua* and his companions, for the boldness of their undertaking, others laugh'd at them for the weakness of their efforts. When building the wall, we are told, *Sanballat and Tobiah laugh'd them to scorn, and despised them, saying, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice in one day? if they begin, will they be able to finish? that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break it down (a).*

And are there none by whom you are insulted in such scornful language? What will these godly reformers do, who pretend to so much more virtue than their neighbours? Do they think to reform the nation? If they begin, will they be able to finish? What will these feeble men do? *Hear O our God for we are despised, and turn their reproach upon their own head (b)* — But neither is this all, you are men,

3. Slandred, censured and condemned. The enemies of the *Jews* laugh'd 'em to scorn, but it was a fictitious laughter; for the attempt they pretended to defy, fill'd 'em with rage, and they really fear'd what they seemed to despise. *They were wroth, took great indignation against 'em, and sought to hinder the work (c);* which they did by threats and menaces, fly insinuations and malicious Charges, exhibited against them to their superiours. Should this be your lot, marvel not at the matter. They that blaspheme your God, won't spare to revile his instruments: But smite with the tongue of slander (d), as they do with the *Fist of wickedness (e).*

Expect that Satan will go forth, and be a lying, slandering spirit in the mouths of his emissaries against God's faithful servants; these will condemn

(a) Neh. 4. 1, 2, 3. (b) Ver. 4. (c) Ver. 1. (d) Jer. 18. 18.
(e) Isa. 50. 4.

you as the troublers of our Israel, tho' you are the chariots and horsemen thereof, and represent your design as prejudicial, if not dangerous, to the church and state, tho' nothing more tends to the safety and honour of both. Your zeal by these will be reckon'd only the Effect of some personal quarrel; and the world bear in hand that an hypocritical affectation of esteem makes you more forward than others are, and busier than you need to be. In short by these your aims shall be misjudged, and your methods censur'd; your selves lie under the imputation of rashness and indiscretion, and which is worse, Unfaithfulness and self seeking. These things will they do to make you odious to the people, and, if possible, obnoxious to the magistrate.

4. You are men betrayed by others. Some pretended to build with the Jews, that being mingled with 'em in the work, they might have the fairer opportunity to hinder it: *Let us build*, say they, *with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we do sacrifice unto him* (a); but this was false: They said they were Jews, but were not, but were found liars. In like manner, some have usurped the name of reformers, and pretended to be of your society; they say to others at least, we are reformers, and engaged in the same holy design, though they are not, but do lie. Their aim is only to get money for themselves, and bring an odium upon you. Hence come many of those little stories, which are rais'd and spread, and too easily believ'd to your disadvantage; for *Report*, say some, *and we will report*. It's to be feared,

5. You are Men deserted and forsaken by others. I wish there are none that having *once put their hand to this plough, have looked back*, being fearful of the

(a) Ezra 4. 2.

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mischiefe that may come upon themselves, and unbelieving as to any good that's like to be done upon others. Judah said, *the strength of the bearers of burdens is decay'd, we are not able to build the wall* (a). And are there none ready to say, the work is too hard, the service too hot, we are not able to proceed; the distemper is too prevailing ever to be cur'd, by any remedies we can apply: *Let no man therefore strive nor reprove another* (b). It's to no purpose to think of reclaiming men so hardned and obstinate in sin. They say, let us alone that we may serve our lusts; then e'en let them alone. If they will ruin themselves who can help it? *That which dies let it die, that which is to be cut off let it be cut off* (c). They don't desire, nay they refuse, they hate to be reform'd: The very applying the remedy exasperates the patient, instead of healing the distemper. If you endeavour to stop them in their course, they quarrel with you for your pains: then give up the cause as *Elijah* did, not from want of zeal for reformation, but because *there's so little prospect of success*. Retire into your cell; mourn for what you can't mend, and cry, Lord have mercy on us. But be assur'd, these pretences of improbability of doing good to others, and likelihood of doing mischief to our selves, are nothing but the sprouts of cursed unbelief, highly dishonourable to God and the promises of his word. If others therefore should draw back, thro' cowardise and indifference, let not this break your ranks and make you run from your colours.

6. *Lastly*, You are reflected on by some for want of success. After all the noise and bustle made in the town, by the reformers, what progress, say they, is made in the work of reformation? The city, the nation, is as wicked as ever. Are not oaths and curses, Is not drunkenness and uncleanness, as

(a) Neh. 4. 10.

(b) Hof. 4. 4.

(c) Zech. 11. 9.

common as ever? Or is the sabbath more religiously observed than heretofore? Thus you are grieved and wounded in the house of your friends. But good men may be mistaken, and I hope are so in this case; There may be more good done than they are aware of: Tho' suppose it were otherwise; the more cause there is for this complaint, the more you are to be pitied and pray'd for. The want of Success is your own trouble, and therefore should not be objected against you by others to your reproach. If the work does go slowly on, the greater need there is of more hands, and that those you have should double their diligence.

To conclude this head, whatever others think, the *God of this world* knows, that every blow you give to sin is a stroke at his kingdom, and therefore raises the whole *posse* of hell to oppose you. The powers of darkness will be up in arms, and set themselves in array against you; those that hate to be reformed, will with one mouth cry down the reformers. The swearers, drunkards, and sabbath-breakers, will take the alarm, and curse the reformation. They that are impatient of all restraint *will hate him that reproves in the gate, and abhor him that speaks uprightly* (a). And which is very shocking, some of those very persons, who by their office are set in defence of the gospel, and oblig'd to afford you what countenance and assistance they can, weaken your hands, traduce your honest endeavours, and represent you to the world as a *company of refined hypocrites, who under a sanctified pretence of greater zeal and purity, turn the world upside down* *Oh tempora, O mores!* What an age are we fallen into? And where will things end?

But tho' you should meet with this and much more, be not offended. If the temple be built, and God's work goes forward, Satan will rage, and the gates

(a) Amos 5. 10.

of hell set themselves against it: But *fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their reviling, the moth shall eat them up as a garment* (a). Relieve yourselves, my brethren, against all this opposition, by considering him in whom all your strength lies, and from whom all your help must come, which leads us to the second general.

II. When we are call'd to this difficult service our eyes must be up unto, and our encouragement deriv'd from Christ, the head and foundation of his church.

Various topicks have been insisted on, and different arguments made use of upon this occasion; all which are of use in themselves, and I question not have been urg'd with good success amongst you. But I humbly think it may be said of this as of *Goliath's* sword, there's none like it. There can be no better weapon, were there but a more skilful hand to use it. And I freely own it's a subject I have a peculiar pleasure in, and therefore even upon this occasion, shall farther evidence the suitability of it to the present design, by shewing,

First, what we are to look for, and expect from Christ in this undertaking. *And*,

Secondly, What encouragement we have to do so.

I. I am to shew what we are to look for and expect from Christ the BRANCH.

1. Wisdom and conduct, that the work may be managed in the best and most becoming Way. Here, if any where, the dove's simplicity shou'd be temper'd with the serpent's wisdom. You had need have your eyes in your Head, as the wise man has. There are many observers that watch for your halting and

(a) Isa. 51. 7, 8.

would rejoice in your fall. So that one great thing requir'd, and indeed an eminent degree of it, is wisdom and prudence, that you may not by any rash and unadvised steps, give them occasion who seek it, to reproach the design it self and condemn the persons that manage it. But they that are of the contrary part may be rather *asham'd* having no evil thing to say of you.

2. Strength and assistance sufficient to the day, and the work of it. You must expect the contradiction of sinners, and all that malice set on fire of hell can do to oppose you. You row against wind and tide; and *wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Lest therefore your hands hang down, and your knees grow feeble, look unto *Jesus, who endur'd the greatest contradiction of sinners against himself;* and tho' he resisted unto blood, set his face like a flint, that you may be arm'd with the same mind, and steel'd with a like courage and resolution, tho' you can't expect it in an equal degree.

3. Success in your undertaking. By his assistance and blessing, you will be men of wonder in the sense some give of the words in the text, *i. e.* men for whom God does wonders, by enabling you to do wonders for God. But without this, your labour will be in vain, your time and strength spent, your peace and lives expos'd for nought. The sins of men may be restrain'd by the coercive force of human laws; but the hearts of men can only be chang'd by the superiour power of divine grace. You may be the happy instruments of preventing the outward acts of sin, and bind men in the chains of the law, that they mayn't range about like savage Creatures, to do mischief where-ever they come; but God alone can change their natures, and turn the beast into the man. And I can't but say with some freedom, in which you will bear with me, there can be no mighty expect-

ation from any attempts of this nature, if Christ, the power and necessity of his grace, be overlook'd; and men don't see themselves concern'd above all things to interest Him in the affair: since he has assur'd us, the great changes to be made in the world, shall be brought about, not so much by human might and power, as by his own spirit (a).

II. I come in the second place to shew what encouragement we have to expect *these supplies* and *this success* from Christ. And,

1. His being endued with perfect wisdom and knowledge, gives us encouragement to expect counsel and direction from him. It would argue too fond an opinion of your own abilities, to think you wanted no more wisdom than you are naturally furnish'd with to manage a work of so much niceness and difficulty. Now *if any man lack wisdom*, as what man does not? *let him ask it of God*, the fountain of wisdom, let him receive it from Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2. His being invested with all power and authority gives us encouragement to depend upon him for strength and success. When he sent forth his disciples, to set up his kingdom in the world, a work of great difficulty, and in which they were sure to meet with the utmost opposition, he prefaces their commission with an account of his own authority, and assures them for their encouragement, *that all power in heaven and earth was given into his hands* (b). All power to subdue his enemies, and uphold his people. To succeed their religious enterprizes, and defeat the others malicious designs. Let this then encourage your dependance; He whom you serve is well able to support you under the weight of your charge, and fortifie your minds against all the opposition of

(a) Zech. 4. 6.

(b) Mat. 28. 18.

your enemies: And what he is able to do, he certainly will do, for faithful is he that has promis'd.

3. The efficacy of his sacrifice, which in one day removed the iniquity of his land, is our great encouragement, when endeavouring to reform a sinful people. *We all*, says the prophet, *like sheep are gone astray, and are turned every one to his own ways, and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all* (a). He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and by bearing them himself, remov'd 'em from us. Witness was born to this by *John the Baptist*, in those words, *Behold the lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world* (a); and this he did in one day, that blessed day of atonement wherein he offer'd himself once for all to God, and by that one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified (c). That which was not, could not be done in many days, in many years, by those innumerable sacrifices offer'd under the law; the son of God perfected by one offering, in one day: such strength there was in the man of God's right hand; it was but one day's work with him to remove the iniquity of his land.

Now from this consideration, it's most natural that our eyes should be directed to the BRANCH, when we are endeavouring to remove the iniquity of the land.

It's certainly the greatest kindness you can do this nation; as it's the greatest mercy God can vouchsafe a people to take away their iniquity: And if there be a blessing yet in store for this poor land, *God will turn again and have compassion on us, subdue our iniquities, and cast our sins into the depth of the seas* (d).

The only means of removing iniquity in a way of atonement and satisfaction, is the sacrifice of Christ. In this you had no hand, for in this he had no partner.

(a) Isa. 53. 6.
(d) Mic. 7. 19.

(b) John 1. 29.

(c) Hebr. 10. 14.

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But as instruments in the hand of God you may be said to remove the iniquity of the land, by your endeavours to reform it. Now this has been the work of many days, of several years with you, and tho' not without some very considerable success, you are far from having accomplish'd a thorough reformation. Many still hate to be reform'd themselves, and hate those that attempt to reform them. The nation, the city, seems over-run with vice and prophaneness. The most putid oaths and the vilest execrations are daily heard in our streets. Young ones have learnt, and old ones han't forgot to prophane the sacred and awful name of God. He is oftner in some mens mouths than their thoughts, and such wretches there are, who send to heaven more wishes to be damned, than they ever put up prayers to be saved. Oaths and curses are as common with some as words; Intemperance and excess, as eating and drinking. Many drink and swear, forget the law, and hate him that reproves in the gate.

A very melancholy reflection! Against which, however, relieve your selves with this consideration; what you have not been able to effect in *many* years, the Branch can accomplish in one day. But *who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once (a)?* Yes! If God will set his hand to the work. For *shall he bring to the birth, and not give strength to bring forth? shall he cause to bring forth, and shut the womb?* Is any thing too hard for him who remov'd the iniquity of his land in one day? Are not the hearts of all men in his hand to turn 'em as he pleases? And can't he as easily make them cease to do evil, and learn to do well, as command 'em to do it? He that made a full atonement by the virtue of his sacrifice, can soon work a thorough reformation

(a) Isa. 66. 8, 9.

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mation by the efficacy of his spirit. He can so purge the land that there shall be no iniquity, no *NEQUAM*, or not such numbers however of those lewd, graceless, worthless wretches, who in so daring a manner insult their God, and defy his laws. He is able to write in the fullest characters, *HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD*, upon all ranks and degrees of men: and make it visible in the common actions and ordinary employments of life, according to that glorious prophecy, *in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, HOLINESS TO THE LORD shall be upon the bells of the horses; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar: Yea every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord; and in that day shall there be no more a Canaanite in the house of the Lord (a)*: Which blessed day the Lord hasten in his time.

I proceed now to the

APPLICATION;

Wherein I shall address my self, first to the gentlemen of this society, and then to others.

I. *To those already engaged in this honourable warfare; and what I propound to my self herein, is both to encourage and direct you.*

1. To animate and encourage you to persevere in this excellent design. Yours is no society formed for any temporal advantages the members thereof expect to reap by it to themselves; but I perswade my self a compassionate concern for your dear country, a warm zeal for the honour of our God, and a sincere desire to promote the valuable interests of religion, are the springs which first gave rise to this noble undertaking, and the generous principles by which you are acted in it. Then happy Britain!

(a) Zech. 14. 20, 21.

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happy *London*! That in thee are found some who seek thy good, and would prevent thy ruin: That there are some to stand in the gap, and make up those breaches, at which we might otherwise justly fear our mercies would go out, and God's judgments come in. How ill so ever things are with us, our case is not yet so bad as theirs, of whom God complained, *I sought for a man that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none* (a). Its some comfort, that among the vast crouds of licentious and incorrigible sinners, some few at least are zealous for the observation of those laws, which others are so forward to break, and dare to reform those that dare to offend. Blessed be God some there are that do agree in this, how much soever they differ in other things; and tho' of different communions, for the worship of God, are of one Society for the Reformation of Manners. Some there are whose souls, like that of righteous *Lot*, are *vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked* (b), and in whom some thing of that excellent spirit prevails, which the royal psalmist expressed in those words, *rivers of waters run down mine eyes; because men keep not thy laws* (c). With him they behold transgressors and are grieved at the dishonour done to God, and the miseries men daily bring upon themselves (d). When *St. Paul* beheld the city of *Athens* so universally given to superstition and idolatry, his spirit was stirred within him at so sad a sight: In like manner, some holy souls are sensibly touched to see the whole city, the whole land, given to all manner of wickedness and impiety. These have been jealous for the Lord of hosts, and resolved as they are able to plead his cause against vice and prophaneness, being sensible this filth and dirt must be swept away by the work of

(a) Ezek. 22. 30.
(d) Acts 17. 16.

(b) 2 Pet. 2. 7, 8. (c) Psal. 119. 136,

Reformation, or we are like to be swept away with the besome of destruction.

This (for your encouragement) takes away national guilt, and we may hope will prevent national judgments.

Had there been ten righteous persons in *Sodom*, it had been preserved from ruin for their sakes. Had there been a society in *Jerusalem*, like that in *London*, we have reason to conclude, those desolating judgments, which unrestrained vice brought upon the city, had been prevented. For thus says God by the prophet, *Run ye to and fro thro' the streets of Jerusalem, see now and know, seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any one that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it* (a). How low did God condescend in the case? If you can find a man, a single person, a few that have a zeal for God, and are active for reformation, I'll spare the land for their sakes. How much more may a considerable number of zealous and faithful reformers prevail to turn away wrath from the land?

However, (for your further encouragement) you'll have this satisfaction, that you have done your duty, discharged your consciences, and delivered your own souls. The mourners, and much more the Reformers in *Jerusalem*, had a mark set upon them for preservation, when the rebels were marked out for destruction, *Ezek. 9. 4.*

And as a further encouragement, though you should fail of success, you shall not lose your reward. If the Lord hearkned and heard, and a book of remembrance was written to record the godly speeches of those that feared the Lord in an evil day, and thought upon his name, how much more will the many good deeds done by you to this nation, be recorded to your immortal honour.

(a) Jer. 5. 1.

Go on, therefore, my brethren, to remove the iniquity of the land by reforming it. Its but a little while this struggle will last. Time and opportunity for service will soon be over. Work, therefore, while it is day, and what your hands find to be done, do it with all your might. Be not weary of this good work; You have run well, let nothing abate your zeal, or hinder your progress, *Lay aside every weight and run with patience the race set before you. Confer not with flesh and blood.* Bring no such dangerous enemies to the council-board. Go on in the strength of the Lord; and do good to mens souls and bodies, though against their wills, and you may have from them but little thanks for your pains. You have God on your side, the promises of his word for your support; the prayers of his people for your success. You have, in a word, the faithful, merciful, and almighty Jesus for your strength, and conduct. And this brings us,

2. To direct and counsel you.

1. Fix your eyes upon, and expect all your supplies from Christ the Branch.

Never leave him out of your work, from whom all your encouragements in it are to be derived. What arguments may not the considering him who endured the greatest contradiction of sinners, furnish you with for patience and constancy, in striving against sin? And how fitly will this serve to store your minds with the tenderest compassion to the souls of men, whilst the warmest zeal is expressed against their provoking crimes?

2. Look well to your selves. When casting the beam out of others eyes, if possible leave not a mote in your own, evidence your uprightness by keeping your selves from your own iniquity, whilst you are endeavouring to remove it from the land; and be careful to set good examples, as you are con-

cerned to suppress bad ones, that your zeal may not be contradicted by your practice.

3. Give God the glory of all your success. Tho' your endeavours, it must be owned, are far from having all the success a good man would wish, yet I'm persuaded they have much more than some do imagine. The land, we may hope, by your means, has been eased in some measure of that load of guilt it once groan'd under the burden of. Many have been reclaim'd, or at least restrained; not a few persons and families saved from ruin and destruction. Some sins driven into corners, which would otherwise, by this time, have appeared with an open face, and been committed far more than they now are in the sight of the sun. If then you have gone through any service for God, and gained any success in your work, assume not the glory of it to yourselves, but ascribe it wholly to God; *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give the glory*, is the strain in which all our songs of praise should run.

Tho' you have done more than others, yet not more than was your duty; and when you have done all, must acknowledge you are but unprofitable servants.

I proceed in the conclusion,

2. To invite and persuade others to set their hand to this good work. Those that are themselves doing the Lord's work, call out for your assistance, or rather *God* himself, by them, makes this proclamation; *who is on my side, who (a)? who will rise up for me against the evil doers (b)? or, who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?* And will not you take part with God against transgressors, and heartily join with them who desire and endeavour to reform the land? can you stand

(a) Ex. 3. 26. (b) Psal. 94. 19.

under the weight of that charge, now, or in the great day? *You have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge for the house of Israel (a).* Won't you then join heart and hand in this excellent and useful undertaking? was there ever more need to do it? how many years had our land lain neglected, and like a field untill'd, overgrown with briars and thorns, which all the pains of others have hitherto been too little to root up? is it not a land hardly to be match'd for impiety, considering the advantages we enjoy, and the engagements we are under to holiness? what improvements are daily made in the cursed art and trade of sin? the most positive and express commands of God are notoriously violated: the most condescending acts of divine goodness in the gift of Christ, and the revelation of the gospel, trampled upon with the profaneest scorn and contempt; and the most engaging appearances of providence in our favour, no otherwise improv'd by many, than as if we were deliver'd to commit all manner of abominations. And this disease, in a word, is become epidemical, having infected all ranks and degrees of men. *I said, surely these are poor and foolish, they know not the way of the Lord, nor understand the judgment of their God. I'll get me to the great men, and speak to them (b):* to the nobles and the priests, who have had a higher birth and better education.

But is it any better with these? alas, no! they are more refractory and obstinate than the former; so that no laws can bind them. For these have altogether broke the Yoke, and burst the bands asunder.

The Apostle's complaint too well befits our day: *There are many walk, of whom I have often told you, and now tell you weeping, they are enemies to the Cross of*

(a) Ezek. 13. 5. (b) Jer. 5. 4, 5.

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Christ (a). It's not only here and there one, that walks after this manner, but great numbers of all sorts and ranks, many of all persuasions and characters: and this is not only a single act of wickedness, committed now and then thro' surprize and the strength of temptation; but its their constant course, and daily practice. *I have*, says the Apostle, *often told you of them, and now tell you weeping*; he cou'd not speak it without tears in his eyes; it was the grief of his soul, and wounded him at the very heart. They are enemies to the cross of Christ, a scandal to that holy name by which they are call'd. Their God is their belly, they glory in their shame, and without preventing mercy their end will be destruction.

These things are not spoken as a satyr upon mankind, and to expose the nakedness of the land. I do not, God, I trust, knows, I do not say this to aggravate matters, and exasperate the spirits of men, too much embitter'd already; but as one really affected with the evils complain'd of, and would rejoice in nothing more than the seeing them remov'd.

Are then these things so? and that they are who can deny? *Do men thus make void the law?* and is it *not then time to work (b)?* High time for us to work for God, and God to work for us; that vertue may yet be upheld in some reputation amongst us, and all morality may'nt be lost, where christianity is profess'd.

Oh then that you would come to the help of the Lord; come in unto the help of his people, against the mighty; the mighty sins and sinners of the day. Help them by your countenance and approbation, in a work so much decry'd and run down. Help them by your substance and estates, in a work of so

(a) Phil 3. 18, 19. (b) Psal. 119. 126,

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much charge and expence; further the work by your fervent prayers, and let your hands be lifted up while the dispute lasts, as those of *Moses* were in the mount, whilst *Joshua* was contending with *Amalek* in the Valley. Let it be your daily request; favour, Lord, this righteous cause; establish thou the work of their hands; the work of their hands establish thou it. Wou'd many be perswaded to join heartily in this laudable design, who knows how far the reformation might yet be carryed; and what blessings the nation might reap thereby? Then be not afraid, be not ashamed to engage in the despised and opposed cause of reformation. Say not, It is in vain to attempt it; we despair of ever seeing any great matters done by it: how can we expect to succeed, considering the circumstances we are under?

Many are grown so daring, they defy all attempts to reclaim them. Some who are obliged by their office to suppress vice and prophaneness, give it too much countenance by their practice; and either will not at all, or with a very ill grace, punish the crimes in others which they frequently commit themselves.

Many live at ease, and, *Gallio* like, care for none of these things. Some that wish well to the land, and would gladly see it reformed, will not touch the work with one of their fingers. Men are divided in their opinions concerning the work it self, and as some doubt whether it be practicable, others question whether it be justifiable, and are ready to blame those that engage in it. These things, it must be owned, are very shocking, and cannot but occasion many thoughts of heart, as the divisions of *Reuben* did.

But be not fearful nor faint-hearted. Let God find you in the exercise of your duty, whatever discouragements you meet with in the way; and
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be assured for your comfort, the time will come when he himself will take the work into his own hand, and effectually lift up a standard against that flood which now seems to bear down all before it: for so has he assured us by his prophet, *Men shall be careless and at ease, upon the land of my people shall come briars and thorns, until the spi. it be poured upon us from on high. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever* (a). Then shall such work as this be carried on with far greater success, and the inhabitants of the world more universally purged from their filth and uncleanness. Then mercy and truth, even amongst men, as they have done with God, shall meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other. Our unnatural divisions and contentions shall then cease. The small sparks of love which are yet left, shall be blown up into a flame, and that fire of wrath and hatred, malice and envy, which never came from heaven, shall be then extinguished. Love and charity, so much recommended by the gospel, and made such a distinguishing badge of christianity, shall be more than a name in the midst of us; and if there shall then be any room for differences of opinions, all persons shall see themselves obliged to the exercise of it.

To conclude, in that day, as we are told in the Words immediately after the text, *Ye shall call every man his neighbour under the vine, and under the fig-tree* (b). Men shall live in plenty and safety, in peace and love; the God of peace and love shall be with them, and the name of the city shall be **JEHOVAH SHAMMAH**, *the Lord is there.*

(a) Isa. 32. 13. 15.

(b) Zech. 3. 10.



*The WISDOM of this World
made foolish.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT THE
MERCHANTS-LECTURE
in *Broad-street.*

S E P T E M B. 1714.

I C O R. I. 29.

-----*Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this
world?*



AFTER the usual salutation, and an acknowledgment of several things very commendable in this church; the Apostle with great earnestness exhorts them to unity and concord among themselves: *I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined*

joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment (a). This, it seems, there was but too much occasion for; it having been declared to him by others, that there were very warm and unchristian contentions among them (b); occasioned by, and expressing themselves in their undue and partial preferring one minister to another. Now this I say, (and reprove you for it) that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ (c). And, to shew himself impartial in his reproofs, he singles out his own admirers, and in a particular manner expostulates with them, Was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul (d)? I baptized very few of you, that not being the work to which I was principally call'd. My business was rather to preach the gospel. Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel (e). And having mentioned his principal work as an apostle, he takes occasion from thence to tell them, how and in what manner he performed it; not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect. Wherein he returns to his former argument, and obliquely touches upon the cause of their unhappy divisions, viz. The vanity of some teachers, who affected a name for wisdom and eloquence; and the folly of some hearers, who admired them upon that account. This the apostle tells them he had carefully avoided, and for this reason, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect, i. e. Lest the plain, simple preaching of a crucified Christ, should be thought insufficient to work faith, and command their belief, without the assistance and force of human wisdom and eloquence; and the effects of it should rather be ascribed to the arguments and persuasions of men, than the efficacy and power of God.

(a) Ver. 10. (b) Ver. 11. (c) Ver. 12. (d) Ver. 13. (e) Ver. 17.

This, he owns, is thought foolishness (a), and therefore rejected (tho' to their own ruin) by those that value themselves upon the profoundness of their learning, and the justness of their own reasoning. But be it so; the apostle proceeds in his own method, and wont be put out of his way by all that contempt they pour upon it; for tho' this be foolishness to them that perish, it's the power of God to them that are saved. Nor was he much concern'd to appear with this sort of wisdom, since *it's written, God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent (b)*. Yea according to this prophecy he hath already done it; the gospel of Christ, wherever it comes, having triumphed over and baffled all the learning of this world, which he plainly insinuates in the following enquiries: *where is the wise? where is the Scribe? where is the disputer of this world?*

Where some think he touches upon three sorts of doctors among the *Jews*, and that the wise signify their learned rabbies; the scribe, the lawyer of the people; the disputer, one that gives the mystical sense of scripture, and whose commentaries are full of questions (c).

Others suppose, that by the wise, he means the the philosophers and learned men among the heathen; by the scribe, the doctors and men of learning, distinguish'd from the common people among the *Jews*; and especially the fathers of some traditions: by the disputer or enquirer, either one that doth more profoundly interpret the law, or that searches deep into physical causes, and can best solve the phenomena's of nature.

Once more: by the wise may be meant the great statesman and politician; by the scribe, one that

(a) Ver. 19. (b) Ver. 18. (c) J Scal. Elen. trihazr. Serrar. p. 267.

wholly employs himself and spends all his time in tumbling over volumes of learned men to get wisdom; and by the disputer of this world, one that searches into subtle questions, and as a man of disquisition, dives into the mysteries of nature, or one that is a shrewd disputer in the *Jewish* schools concerning their traditions. These (whoever are intended) the apostle insults and triumphs over, referring it to themselves and others, what these had ever done to bring men to the true knowledge of God and his will. Where's the wisdom of the philosophers among the Gentiles? and of the interpreters of the law among the *Jews*? what's become of the great statesman and politician; of the profound scholar, or the curious enquirer and men of disquisition? what's become of them, of their wisdom and learning? what did these avail to secure themselves, prolong their lives, or save their souls? *Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* i. e. Manifested it to be errant folly, in comparison of that way he hath chosen, for the bringing men to the knowledge of himself, and to happiness and salvation thereby. And thus we are brought to the words of the text, in opening of which I shall endeavour to shew,

- I. What we are to understand by the wisdom of this world.
- II. How and in what sense God makes it foolish.
- III. For what reason and why he doth so. And then,
- IV. What use we may and should make of the whole.

Let us then enquire,

- I. What we are to understand by the wisdom of this world.

I shall deliver my thoughts of it in the three following particulars.

1. Natural reason, improv'd by great industry and diligence, to a considerable degree of learning and knowledge.

When *Moses* is said to be learned in all the wisdom of the *Egyptians* (a), it is as much as to say he was a good scholar, well skill'd in prophane arts and sciences, and had attained an eminent degree of humane literature. This was the wisdom of the *Egyptians*. This is at least one probable sense of the apostle's words, *Ver. 21. For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, &c. i. e.* By all their natural light and acquired learning they could never arrive at the true knowledge of God. The apostle distinguishes the world into the *Greek* and *Barbarian* (b), the wise and unwise, *i. e.* the learned and unlearned. The wise were the philosophers of *Greece* and the orators of *Rome*. This is what the *Greeks* sought after and expected to find in the gospel: *The Greeks seek after wisdom* (c); something that has in it profound learning, and is agreeable to the principles of their reason and philosophy. But God has chosen the foolish things of this world, *i. e.* Men of little esteem in the world, that have no name either for their natural, or acquired and learned accomplishments: God at first chose these to confound the wise, to silence and nonplush the *Rabbies* of the church, and the learned philosophers of the age. By the wisdom then of this world, I understand that which the meer natural man may be endued with, and attain unto, by his own abilities, improv'd by severe studies, and which gives him the name and reputation of a learned man.

2. The discoveries which these learned men make,

(a) Acts 7. 22.

(b) Rom. 1. 14.

(c) Ver. 22.

and their contrivances for the bringing about that end, which they propound to themselves or others.

And here I intend the wisdom both of the statesman and politician ; and that of the moralist and philosopher, *i. e.* Political and moral wisdom. The former notion of worldly wisdom cou'd not be wholly disregarded, without a manifest overlooking the context. Some suppose the apostle refers to this in that question, *where is the wise?* *i. e.* the great statesman and politician. And those passages in the old testament, (*Job* 5. 12. *Isa.* 29. 14.) which its probable the apostle aimed at, when he says, *it's written*, do manifestly lead to this, as that wisdom which it's there foretold God would destroy and bring to nothing. Taking it in this sense, by the wisdom of this world I understand the various projects and contrivances of humane policy to bring about its ends. *Achitophel* was a man fam'd for this wisdom, reputed an oracle in his day, and consulted with as such upon all occasions: His counsel which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God (a). This counsel was the wisdom of the world, the projects and contrivances of that wisdom to bring about a designed end.

The other sort of worldly wisdom is that of the moralist and philosopher ; and by this I understand the rules and dictates of learned men for bringing persons to the enjoyment of true and lasting happiness. The writings of learned men may very properly be stiled their wisdom, as those of the sacred scriptures are called *the wisdom of God* (*Luke* 11. 49.) Here it is they shew the utmost of their knowledge and skill, and give specimens of their wisdom, in directing men to the paths of rest and happiness. This being that common centre in which

(a) 2 Sam. 16. 23.

all mens desires meet, and the port at which they would willingly arrive, the wisdom of this world pretends not only to tell us what it is, and wherein it consist, but also how it may be obtained, and what course its necessary we steer in order to the arriving at this haven of rest; tho' in all these things it's evident they are greatly at a loss, and miserably divided among themselves. In this sense I understand those words of the apostle: *For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent* (a): He is shewing what way the wisdom of God pitched upon for man's happiness and salvation, viz. the death of Christ. Now this contrivance of infinite wisdom is pronounced foolishness by the wisdom of the world. The way of saving us by a crucified Christ to the learned *Greeks is foolishness*, ver. 18. 23. They think it a vain and foolish thing to attempt or expect it this way, and will therefore substitute something else in the room of it; and this I call the wisdom of the world, which God maketh foolish. The theorems of their moral and practick philosophy, their rules and prescriptions of virtue; their discourses of the Gods, and the worship due to 'em; their sacrifices whereby to atone and pacify them in answer to such an enquiry as that, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? and bow my self before the most high?* &c. This is the wisdom of the world; their reasonings and contrivances for bringing men to God, or securing themselves against him; these are the thoughts of worldly wisdom, which the Lord knows are vain (b).

3. The way which this wisdom prescribes, and the methods it makes use of, the more effectually to recommend these contrivances to the world. By this I intend what the apostle so often disclaims,

(a) Ver. 19.

(b) 1 Cor. 3. 20.

and insinuates did very much obtain among learned writers, *The wisdom of words* (a); *the enticing words of man's wisdom; the wisdom of men*, 1 Cor. 2. 4, 5. And again, *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect; howbeit not the wisdom of this world, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches*, v. 13. Corinth was a city, that abounded with philosophers and rhetoricians, whose discourses and writings were full of human wisdom; and this wisdom they sought for in the gospel. *The Jews require a sign, the Greeks seek after wisdom*; something that had in it profound learning, and exact oratory; wherein beauty was added to language, the better to engage their attention, and the more easily to command their belief. The apostle had an eloquence in his preaching and writing; we speak wisdom (says he) among them that are perfect, but then such only as was agreeable to the simplicity and majesty of the gospel, and all other wisdom he disclaims, as that which God would make foolish; which that he hath done, and how, comes now to be shew'd;

II. In what sense then, and how does God make foolish the wisdom of this world? That he hath done so, is implied in the question; *Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* certainly he has; but how? I answer, not by destroying the exercise of reason, or the use of learning; as if the holiest men must needs be the greatest fools: Reason and religion are at no such odds, that they cannot consist together. There's no occasion for men to lay aside their learning, when they enter into Christ's school, nor are they requir'd to abandon all just reasoning and argumentation as carnal and useless things, when they come to know the truth as it is in Jesus. The converting men to christianity don't

(a) 1. Cor. 1. 17.

turn them into fools and ideots. No! these things are excellent in themselves, and may be made very serviceable to religion, whilst they act ministerially, and serve as an handmaid, to attend upon and open the word, though without this they are all weak and defective. They are gifts of God, and as the spoils of the *Egyptians* were dedicated to the service of the tabernacle, may be of singular use to the church. In the first planting of the gospel, God made little use of these things; the want of them being supplied by extraordinary gifts and immediate inspiration; without learning the apostles were able to speak in divers tongues. But when no such immediate inspiration can be expected or pretended to, it must be great weakness to suppose that God, by making foolish the wisdom of this world, has destroyed either the exercise of reason, or the necessity and usefulness of learning. No man can discredit human learning, but he must at the same time disparage his own understanding. Its an attempt, says an ingenious (a) Person, that would be impracticable; because if well done, it must be by arguments drawn from the store-house of learning; and then at the same time we are reasoning against it, we are really arguing for it, and prove the usefulness of what we pretend to decry. If its ill done, and the performance be unlearned, it's to no purpose, and might as well have been let alone, and shews withal the need of what we are denying. But then it may be too much magnified, and is so when men are fond of their learning, to the loss of their religion. It must not be suffered to usurp, but taught its duty, and kept in its place. Here we must deny our selves, not affect to shew it, nor value our selves too much upon it; *but if any man among you seemeth to be wise, in the wisdom and learning*

(a) Preface to reflections on humane learning.

of this world, let him become a fool, as to this, that he may be wise indeed, according to and with the wisdom of God, for God (a) maketh foolish the wisdom of this world (b); i.e. he declares and manifests it to be foolish, insulie and unfavoury, having nothing in it that's excellent, compar'd with the wisdom of God and knowledge of Christ. He infatuates this wisdom, pours contempt upon it, and proves it to be errant folly. And this he doth various ways.

1. By disappointing the devices of carnal wisdom and policy. The wisdom of the world takes crafty counsel against God's people, and consults against his hidden ones, saying, come and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel be no more in remembrance (c): And vain man thinks himself so wise, and his schemes so well concerted, that nothing shall be able to hinder their execution. But it's written, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent: where is the wise (d)?* The great statesman and politician; what's become of him and his well concerted schemes? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? and this, by giving them up to foolish and destructive counsels, which tend to their own ruin, or turning the wisest counsels into foolishness, and not suffering them to be follow'd: where he takes the wise in their own craftiness, and carries the counsel of the froward headlong (e); for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord (f). He frustrates the tokens of liars, makes diviners mad; he turns the wise men backwards, and makes their knowledge foolish (g). Pharoah went cunningly to work, having a design to wear out the whole race of Israel, that there might not be so much as the name of an Israelite left; He said unto

(a) *Επιμαρτυρε.*

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 19. 20.

(f) Isa. 44. 25.

(b) 1 Cor. 3. 18.

(e) Job. 5. 12.

(c) Psal. 83. 3. 4.

(f) Prov. 21. 30.

his people, come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply (a); do all we can to suppress and keep them under, lest they grow dangerous by their numbers, &c. Here's the wisdom of the world, and its politick contrivances; but observe how God made this foolish; he baffl'd the whole design, and made it work quite contrary to their expectation; for the more he afflicted them, the more they grew. What he design'd should in time root out the whole race, serv'd only to encrease their number.

Achitophel was a deep politician, a man of a long head, the oracle of his day for wisdom (b); this render'd *Absalom's* conspiracy against *David* the more formidable and dangerous; but God made foolish this man's wisdom, by turning his counsel backwards to his own ruin, and *Absalom's* overthrow, for God was purpos'd to destroy it.

Haman was a daring man, and a bitter enemy to the *Jews*, against whom he devis'd an evil device, which prosper'd for a while; but tho' he began to build, he was not able to finish; his politick contrivance only brought himself to the gallows, and rais'd the man he designed to ruin. He conceiv'd mischief, but brought forth vanity. He made a pit, and digg'd it; but fell into the ditch which he had made. His mischief return'd upon his own head, and his violent dealing came down upon his own pate (c). Such things as these God has done, and proceeds to do in the course of his providence. For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. Woe therefore to them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, who seeth us? And who knoweth us? Surely your turning things upside-down shall be as the

(a) Exod. 1. 10.

(b) 2 Sam. 2. 14.

(c) Psal. 7. 14, 15, 16.

potter's clay (a); your subtle devices are easily alter'd as the clay by the hands of the potter. For the Lord bringeth to nought the counsel of the heathen, he maketh the devices of the people of none effect; but the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations (b).

2. By evidencing the insufficiency of human wisdom, to conduct men to true happiness; in that it cannot furnish them with any account at all of many things they are concern'd to know, nor give them distinct and satisfactory notions, even of those things they are not altogether ignorant of. For instance,

1st. The wisdom of this world could never discover nor bring men to the knowledge of the true God. Some notions indeed they had of the supream being; but how dark and confus'd, is evident to any one that enquires into this matter; which makes good the apostle's observation, *That the world by wisdom knew not God (c)*. How wise soever they thought and profess'd themselves, herein they shew'd their weakness and folly; that they never could of themselves, and by all their wisdom and philosophy come to the true knowledge of their creator, tho' its certain *he was not far from any of them, for in him they liv'd and mov'd, and had their being*. Tho' the works of nature in every part of 'em sufficiently evidenced a deity, either the world made so little use of their reason, that they saw him not at all, when by the impressions of himself he was easy to be found: or at best, never attained by all their natural light and contemplation, such a knowledge of God, as freed 'em from the grossest conceptions of him, and was sufficient to bring them at present to a life of holiness, or to a state of happiness hereafter. We may tumble over the books of

(a) Isa. 29. 14, 15, 16. (b) Psal. 33. 10, 11. (c) 1 Cor. 1. 21.

all the philosophers, and yet never by these come to frame just notions of God in our mind, so foolish and contemptible is the wisdom of the world; and therefore it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.

2dly. The wisdom of this world can give no just nor satisfactory account of the entrance of sin. Some thing indeed may, and cannot but be perceiv'd by this light, of the disorder and irregularity of the human soul; the disease is not altogether hid from them; there is something in us, says *Aristotle*, repugnant to right reason. It's *Augustine's* observation; this *Tully* saw the thing, the disease, but knew not the cause. None of the wise men of this world could ever of themselves hit upon sin's true genealogy; something they felt of the disease, but could never yet find out how and which way they took the infection. They see themselves in a pit, but know not who threw them in. The original cause and manner of sin's traduction, they know nothing of. And as this wisdom could not hit upon the cause, so nor,

3dly, Find out the cure of this disease. The most exact insight into natural causes and effects, leaves the mind ignorant of true happiness, and the way to attain it. Men waste their candle in vain, whilst searching after it by this light; all their contrivances to subdue their passions, quiet their consciences, to expiate their sins, and appease their deities, are at the best, vain and trifling, in many instances of them monstrous and absurd. The morality of the *Gentiles* was evidently defective herein; their philosophy seem'd to have spent its strength, and done its utmost, yet was not sufficient nor effectual to man in this imperfect state. Some of 'em indeed had juster notions of God, the soul, and future retributions than others; and in some of their writings, are found fine strokes and

scatter'd sayings; yet even the best of 'em express'd themselves too doubtfully to be depended on, and were far from arriving at any thing that could settle the mind of man in the discharge of his duty, especially under the greatest pressures and difficulties. Their institutions were so very uncertain and slippery, a man could not find any thing stable enough whereon to fix his foot, and prevent endless doubts and wavering. Besides many of 'em espous'd principles manifestly false and absurd, serving only to expose the folly of their authors: As that all the blessedness we prosecute in the course of vertue, was to be enjoy'd in this mortal life; and to say a man was happy after death, was altogether absurd: yea such rules and prescriptions they give concerning vertue, that it's hard to say what it is. Some taught that, in order to make men happy, they must live up to nature, endeavour to be rich and powerful, and every thing that was easy; divest themselves of humanity, and be absolutely unconcern'd at any thing that should befall 'em; Others came to question all, and think nothing was true or false, good or evil; and that happiness lay in a perfect indifference, pretending even in torments to feel no pain, and to taste happiness, and not be affected with pleasure. *But what is this chaff to the wheat?* Yea, what are all their most celebrated theorems to divine institutions and gospel rules? *The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain* (a). That the best contrivances of worldly wisdom and learning, for the bringing men to God and happiness in him, are foolish in themselves, and unprofitable to them. Whoever will collect the moral rules of philosophers, and compare them with what is contain'd in the sacred scriptures, will easily observe how wide the

(a) 1 Cor. 3. 20.

difference is, and that God, by giving so much better an institution, has made foolish the wisdom of this world. If they had so much light as to perceive their own wandrings, they knew not how to remedy these disorders, nor return into the way for want of a proper guide. They were not agreed among themselves wherein that happiness consisted, which they were in the pursuit of. Their different opinions concerning it were so extravagantly multiplied, that they amounted to no less than 288, according to *Augustine's* observation from *Varro* (a). And if the difference concerning the ultimate end, in which, if in any thing, the common sense of mankind should agree, was so great; we may easily imagine what agreement there was like to be among them, concerning the way and means of attaining it. We find all their moral philosophy, their best Ethicks strangely puzzl'd and confus'd, for want of the assistance of a particular divine revelation; tho' these sparks struck out of the light of nature might give 'em some direction, they fail'd all mankind as a perfect rule. A celebrated writer, after he has imputed the barbarism of the world to the crafty management of priests, yet owns it's too hard a thing for reason to establish morality in all its parts upon its true foundations, with a clear and convincing light (b). We see, says he, how unsuccessful in this the attempts of philosophers were before our Saviour's time. How short their systems came of a true and compleat morality is very visible. And again, whatever was the cause, it's plain in fact, that human reason unassisted, fail'd men in its great and proper business of morality.

3. By leaving men to the conduct of their own

(a) Aug. de civitat. Dei, l. 19. c. 1.
Christianity, pag. 265.

(b) *Reasonableness of*

wisdom, and suffering them to run into the grossest follies and absurdities. Let any man be left to his own wisdom, and it will soon shew it self to be errant folly. When *Saul* acted under the conduct of his own understanding, *Samuel* tells him he play'd the fool. God turns wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish, by leaving them to themselves, and giving them up to their own counsels, which will always prove ruinous and destructive. Nothing will be more vain and absurd in its imaginations, than the wisdom of man when left to it self, as appears,

In its determinations, both concerning the world, and the creator of it.

Concerning the world. The wisdom of man fancies it to be eternal ; or the product of mere chance and blind fortune, owing its original to a casual and fortuitous concurrence of atoms jumbled together, and falling no one knows how, into such a regular order and system. Is this indeed to be wise? Or rather could any thing be more absurd and irrational? Is it not evident from hence, that the wisdom of the world is foolish? And it ever will be so when left to it self.

The imaginations of human wisdom are no less vain, concerning God himself, his nature, worship, and providence. The heathens *professing themselves to be wise* (a), usurping to themselves both the name and thing, as if wisdom must needs live and die with them, being left to themselves, became the most foolish of creatures in their reasonings and imaginations, *changing the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things*. They debas'd the glorious deity, by forming the most unworthy conceptions of him, and performing to him

(a) Rom. i. 21.

such acts of worship, as were neither fit for a reasonable creature to offer, nor the divine being to accept. They concluded, that the Gods must be appeas'd for the sins of men, and fell into the notion of sacrifices for atonement; and because they could not fully perswade themselves, that this could be done by the blood of beasts, they were content to do it with the lives of men. In *Africa*, as *Tertulian* tells us, they sacrific'd their children to *Saturn* (a). Another tells us, that when the *Carthaginians* were overcome by *Agathocles*, king of the *Sicilians*, to appease their incensed deities, they sacrificed two hundred noble mens sons to *Saturn*. *Cicero* (b) pleading for *Fonteius*, won't allow the testimony of the *Gauls* in the cause, because they were a people that made it a part of their religion, when under any fear or distress, to defile the altars and temples of their Gods with human sacrifices, and retain'd to that day the barbarous and cruel custom of sacrificing men. Of all which we have a particular representation in that anxious enquiry, and answer to it, *Mic. 6. 6, 7. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the most high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Such impracticable and barbarous proposals, under a sense of sin, and fear of punishment, plainly evidence the darkness and folly of human wisdom in the matters of religion.

And they became no less vain in their imaginations concerning the providence of God: One of the learned among the heathens (c), reckons it a thing to be derided and laugh'd at, that the chief power hath the care of mankind, or takes any notice

(a) *Tert. apol. p. 9. Scorp. p. 624.* (b) *Cic. orat. pro. Font.*
(c) *Plin. lib. 2. c. 7. p. 19.*

of his affairs: *Can we believe, says he, that he should be polluted with so fordid and troublesome a service?* And towards the latter end of that chapter, to shew the thoughts he had of God himself, tells us, it's the chief comfort of imperfect nature in man, that God can't do all things; and among several things he reckons up as instances of it, these are some, that he can't give mortal men an eternity, nor call back the dead, &c. Well may it be said, *Thy knowledge and thy wisdom hath perverted thee (a)*; this high conceit of thy own wisdom hath misled thee, and carried thee into the way of sin and destruction. *Professing themselves to be wise (b)*, pretending to it, and glorying in it, *they shew themselves to be fools, and die at last without wisdom (c)*. *How then do you say, we are wise (d)*? Is it not manifest, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness? whenever men are to shape a religion to themselves by the light, and under the conduct of their own reason, they run into a thousand follies, and, notwithstanding all their pretences to, and boasts of wisdom, by the vanity of their imaginations, shew themselves fools.

4. By establishing such a system of truths, as the wisdom of this world could never have pitch'd on without a particular revelation. There are many things in the gospel so much out of the way, that no human wisdom could once have had a thought of, unless God had reveal'd them to us by his word. The great doctrine of salvation by an incarnate God, obeying and dying in our nature and place, was a contrivance could never have enter'd into the heart of man, how fruitful soever in other inventions. To contrive a way wherein God's honour might be effectually secur'd, and man's safety at the same time as fully provided for;

(a) Isa. 47. 10. (b) Rom. 1. 22. (c) Job 4. 21. (d) Jer. 8. 8.

and then to find out a person fit for, and equal to this undertaking, is a difficulty that would have nonplust the wisdom of all the angels in heaven, and much more of all the men on earth.

This is *Nodus Deo vindice dignus*. The thoughts of the wisest men could never have waded into this depth. Herein appears the manifold wisdom of God; and this makes foolish the wisdom of the world, being so much above its reach. This lay hid in God, as a plot that could never have been form'd in the womb of any created understanding: it far transcends its utmost reach. The most enquiring genius could never have hit upon it. It might as soon have enter'd into the head of an *Israelite*, that the looking to a brazen serpent erected on a pole, should heal the wounds given him by a fiery serpent; as it could have entered into the heart of man to imagine, that the stripes of a dying person should be the healing of those wounds, which sin had caused in the souls of men.

5. By propounding those truths to our belief, which the wisdom of man cannot fully comprehend, even when they are reveal'd. Now that the great truths of the gospel are brought to light, such as the doctrines of the Trinity, incarnation of the eternal word, justification by another's righteousness, the resurrection of the same body from the dead, &c. how does the wisdom of man stand gazing at 'em, as things too big to be grasp'd by its short span. When our line has run its utmost length, we must sit down on the brink, and with amazement cry out, oh the depth! such knowledge is too wonderful for us. The wisdom of man is so far from discovering them, that when they are reveal'd, it cannot comprehend them. These are discoveries altogether supernatural. Most, if not all attempts of learned men to explain the *modus* of 'em, especially that of the Trinity, and to accommodate

commodate them to the reason and reach of man, darken at least, if they don't give up, the very thing we contend for, and they pretend to unfold. These doctrines, as one observes, are like a temple filled with smoke, which not only hinders the view of the quickest eye; but hurts the sight of such as dare with an undue curiosity pry into them. Thus by revealing what so far exceeds our comprehension, and obliging us to believe things so much above our reason, tho' not contrary to it, God makes foolish the wisdom of this world.

6. By acting in a way so very different from, and contrary to the methods, which human wisdom would dictate in our salvation. God will have those signatures upon his own proceedings, which shall distinguish them from all human contrivances whatsoever. The wisdom of this world shall never chalk out a way for him to walk in. His designs are not laid according to the schemes of men, but pursued in methods suitable to the greatness of his own wisdom, that the less of man, and the more of himself, might appear in them; and to make good what he speaks by the prophet, *My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways*; but my ways and methods of bringing men to happiness, are as much above, and as widely different from your ways, as the heavens are distant from, and above the earth. And this in sundry instances.

1. In the person appointed to be the Saviour and redeemer of his people. The blessed God from everlasting determin'd to glorify himself in rescuing a number of *Adam's* posterity from those miseries into which the first apostacy plung'd both himself and them. But how shall this be effected? which way shall this glorious design be brought about? consult the wisdom of this world; let human policy be heard, and it's probable we shall be told,

told, it must be done by the appearance of some great and extraordinary person upon the stage of the world, with the pomp and grandeur of a prince, to answer the character, and command the respect of a deliverer. Let him have a numerous train to attend him, powerful armies to fight for him, and large revenues to reward his followers; let him live in the utmost splendour, and be reverenc'd by all for his wisdom and power, authority and wealth, &c.

According to human policy, when Christ came into the world, he must have acted such a part as this. *It's fit*, said one of the heathens, *that if the son of God come into the world, he appear as the sun, which renders it self conspicuous by its own light.*

But God makes foolish the wisdom of this world, by acting just the reverse to its dictates. He saves us indeed by a great and renowned person; but one that is not so in outward appearance, and the world's account. He sends his own son, but under those circumstances, which render him very unlikely, and, in the judgment of man's wisdom, very unfit, to be a deliverer. He was born of poor parents, and in a very mean way; descended from a family, which at that time made no figure in the world; the prince's scepter being turned into the carpenter's ax. He entred and acted upon the stage of the world under the greatest outward disadvantages, so that *his own received him not*: they did not know him, would not acknowledge him: this was not the Messiah they looked for. They saw no form nor comeliness in him; no outward advantages or sensible glory, to attract their Eyes, and command their respect: they refused him, as an unfit stone to be laid in the foundation of God's building. They could not think a carpenter's son a proper person to build God's house; that a man so long hid among chips was born to sit upon the royal throne

throne of *Israel*; that hands, always us'd to hew logs of timber, were made to wield the sceptre of heaven and earth; and one that wanted all necessary education, should be the prophet of God's people; a Messiah and a king living in poverty and persecution, and dying the death of a slave and malefactor, they could not put together.

But this very person thus rejected by the builders, God made the head of the corner, and by acting herein the reverse to all human policy, made foolish the wisdom of this world.

2. In the means by which, and the manner wherein this deliverance is brought about. After a poor inglorious life, this deliverer submits to an ignominious and accursed death: the very persons he came to deliver, crucified him as an impostor; and the enemies he came to subdue, seem'd to triumph over him as impotent.

Now what more contemptible in it self, and opposite than this, to sense and reason? *the wisdom of the world* pronounces this *foolishness* (a), and declares it an absurdity too great to be received by men of sense. Such a man as this save us! and save us in such a way! is it likely that he should save others, that could not, or however did not save himself? can the Saviour's death be the sinners life? must we depend upon him for deliverance from sin and death, who himself fell under the power of both? can another's dying on a cross, and descending into the grave, be the means of bringing up a lost world to life and immortality? how absurd and ridiculous is this? what can be more incredible and unlikely? who can hear it, and not be shocked at the report? can this ever be the way of saving a lost world, says human wisdom? yes, answers the wisdom of God, this is my way of saving sinners; and tho' you call it foolishness, it is the wisdom and power of God

(a) 1 Cor. i. 23.

to every one that believes, and is saved. It's by this I make foolish all your wisdom, so ordering it that death shall be the means of life, and shame the path to glory. You shall be heal'd by stripes, crowned by the cross, comforted by sorrows, enriched by poverty, advanced by disgrace, and quickned by death. And thus the wisdom of this world is made foolish, God acting in this great affair so contrary to all its rules and dictates.

3. The wisdom of this world is made foolish by the methods which God takes for the prevailing with men to accept this salvation, *viz.* The preaching of the cross, and that in a crucified manner. If men are to be captivated to the obedience of Christ, and made subject to the faith of the gospel, the wisdom of the world would suppose it must be done by might and power. But *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal(a)*. Christ's victories are not won by force of arms, but the power of the spirit; not by might nor by power, but by *my Spirit*, saith the Lord. The redeemer of souls captivates thousands to himself, without drawing any other sword, than that of the spirit. If the world is to be turned upside-down, it's by the foolishness of preaching. The great revolutions in Christ's kingdom are brought about without blows or blood-shed. The strong holds of sin and Satan are dismantled, not by the thundring of canons, but the soft whispers of grace, and the gentle breathings of the word and spirit; as unlikely a thing in the eyes of men, as the throwing down *Jericho's* walls, by the sound of rams horns. By this foolishness of preaching, this simple, foolish, needless thing, as it's accounted by many, it pleases God to save them that believe. To this add, that the gospel was to be preach'd in a cru-

cified manner. If such great things must be performed by these means, then according to the wisdom of this world, it must be done with all the beauty of language, and the arts of oratory. No, says the apostle, *My preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the evidence and demonstration of the spirit*, that I might commend myself to the consciences of men, and their faith might not seem to stand in the *wisdom of man*, but the *power of God*; for divine truths need not the meretricious ornaments of human paint, but shine best in their own native beauty.

4 By the instruments which God makes use of and employs in this great design. The wisdom of this world would suppose this great revolution must be brought about by men of power and authority, or at least by persons of the most refined parts and greatest accomplishments; Satan chuses oft times the subtlest men, and the most learned, desiring, as *Austin* once told a learned young man, to grace his cause by such bright ornaments, and gain it credit by their reputation, whom he employs for its support.

But instead of philosophers and statesmen, in the first planting of the gospel, our Lord made choice of a few fishermen to do his work in the world; men of a mean rank and condition, without the adventitious helps of human learning, that knew no language but that of their native country. A dozen illiterate, naked, unarmed men, are sent out to turn the world upside-down, and bring persons to renounce those idolatries in which they had been born and bred all their days, and list themselves under a new master, and he a crucified one. Now this it might be thought, is to affront the world: are these few silly men the persons that must be sent on such an errand? are they fit to confound Judaism, over-turn Paganism, and alienate the minds

minds of men from those several opinions, which had been rooted in them by education, and established by a long succession?

But these are the men whom the wisdom of God thought fit to make use of upon this occasion, how contrary and absurd soever it may appear to the methods of human wisdom. *You see your calling, brethren, i. e. what methods God takes, what instruments he makes use of in calling you; Not many mighty, not many noble, not many wise men after the flesh, are employed in calling you; but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise; base things, and things despised, and which are not, to bring to nought things that are(a).* These shall confound and put to silence all the learned doctors and rabbies of the age; and thus without the wisdom of the world, God makes foolish the wisdom of it.

5. The persons, which for the most part, are perswaded and prevailed upon to embrace the christian faith, is another instance of this. If God designs to acquire a reputation and credit to his cause, he will sure, says the wisdom of the world, call in the great one's of the earth, and men of learning to support it by the force of their authority, and the influence of their examples. Religion will need men of learning to support it by their arguments, and men of power to defend it by their arms: but God's ways are not as man's, nor his thoughts as ours. He maketh foolish the wisdom of the world, by acting herein contrary to its dictates.

Tho' he reserves a liberty to himself, and sometimes goes out of his way, to save some of the noble and mighty, and wise ones of the world, yet ordinarily the poor have the gospel preach'd to

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 25, 26.

'em, and are made to receive it. Our Saviour gives solemn thanks to his father, that he had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and reveal'd 'em unto babes (a). Many wise philosophers, with all their learning, have been thrust down to hell, when a poor unlearned christian, notwithstanding his ignorance of other things, has been exalted to heaven.

6. The doctrines he requires to be taught unto, and receiv'd by his followers, is another instance of this. When the wisdom of the world is to shape a religion, it shall be so contriv'd as to make it easily go down; *Mahomet's* cup is made luscious and sweet, knowing men are soon prevail'd upon to espouse what gratifies the flesh, and will easily deliver themselves into the hands of those opinions, that offer fair quarter to their lusts. Or if in this, or any other constitution, as that of Popery, some austerities should be prescribed, it fixes man upon his own bottom, by making them meritorious; and as the one gratifies his lusts, the other feeds his pride. Men are willing to be at some expence and trouble in religion, may they have the honour of saving themselves.

But the gospel is a mystery of Godliness. It lays the ax to the root of every lust; teaches and enables men to deny all ungodliness, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Tho' it affirms our being justified by another's righteousness, (for by one man's obedience, many are made righteous) yet it maintains the necessity of good works, and strictly obliges men to the exercise of an universal holiness, as that, *without which no man shall see the Lord*; and yet, to hide pride from men, teaches them after all, to acknowledge they are but unprofitable servants.

In a word, the disciples of our Lord proclaim'd a doctrine most repugnant to flesh and blood, and

(a) Mat. 11. 25.

directly opposite to mens worldly interests. They, as well as their master prepar'd men to expect troubles, afflictions and persecutions; exhorted them to a contempt of the world; to deny themselves, as to their honour, ease, and present interests, and follow the Lamb wheresoever he went. They recommended humility to a proud world; and of an uncharitable world requir'd love even to their enemies; and taught a revengeful world to receive and forgive injuries, &c. and what could there be in all this to recommend it self to mankind? But thus God made foolish the wisdom of this world.

7. This appears in the encouragements propounded to those that embrace these doctrines, and submit to such precepts. Human policy directs a scheme, wherein all worldly advantages shall be propounded to the votaries of religion. In the account of worldly wisdom, it would be necessary for Christ to attemper his doctrine to mens sensual inclinations and worldly interests: and therefore to make large promises of riches, honours, pleasure and ease, to those that most distinguish themselves by a proficiency in his doctrine, and a zeal for his service. Did all preferments lie on the side of religion, and were this the surest way to rise in the world; might his disciples and followers expect for that reason, to have places and preferments, to be made great and honourable, lords and nobles, to wear stars and garters; many would then embrace his religion, as the *Shechemites* submitted even to circumcision, for the sake of that worldly advantage they hoped to reap by it.

But herein God makes foolish the wisdom of this world; he bribes no men into his measures by the prospects of outward advantage: He gives them no expectation of a crown, but prepares them for the cross, *if any man will come after me, let him de-*

ny himself, and take up his cross (a). So far is he from giving him any reason to expect he shall gain the treasures he has not, by his profession of religion, he prepares him to part with even those that he has for the sake of the gospel. The way of strict religion don't lead to honour and preferments in kings courts, but sometimes to prisons, dungeons, banishment, and death it self. It's observ'd by almost every one on this occasion, that in the primitive times there was hardly a tribunal to which the christians were not cited, or a torture which they did not endure. The doctrines of the gospel never court the senses, nor at all gratify the flesh, by promising the splendour of life, the profits of the world, or the pleasures of sin: But teach us rather to be crucified to all these, and content our selves with a recompence at present in spiritual comforts, and hereafter with that of an heavenly inheritance.

Now this, says the wisdom of the world, is the most absurd thing imaginable: who will ever be disciples upon these terms? But herein God makes foolish the wisdom of this world.

He propounds the truest pleasures in his service here, and the fulness of pleasure in his presence hereafter; but as for present temporal rewards, he gives no man reason to expect them, but rather prepares him for the contrary. And yet this way shall go down; he will have followers upon these terms: such as can forget their worldly interests, trample upon every thing here that's inconsistent with their profession; and be content to be stripp'd, bereav'd; and when call'd to it, take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, yea, the loss of their lives, not counting these too dear for him, who thought not his dearest blood too great a price for their redemption.

(a) Mat. 16. 24.

Thus,

Thus, in these several instances, we have seen how, and by what God makes foolish the wisdom of this world. For what reason he does so, comes next to be consider'd.

I proceed therefore to enquire,

III. Why God thus makes foolish the wisdom of this world?

1. *Reason.* This is done to make it evidently appear, that the christian religion is no humane contrivance, nor the spreading of it an effect of man's wisdom and power; but that the whole is of God. Had he proceeded in another method, and shap'd a religion according to the dictates of worldly wisdom; and pursuant to these, had he accomodated himself to mens secular interests, and indulg'd their sensual appetites, the whole would have been thought the politick contrivance of some subtle and designing men, to serve a base and sinister End. Whereas now, such a suggestion is the most absurd and unreasonable one in the world. If the gospel be a contriv'd fable, and the effect only of man's cunning and policy, it's certainly one of the worst contrived fables in the world for its authors; was it design'd to subserve their own interests, they were surely the most mistaken of all creatures, and consulted the worst for themselves imaginable. This then can never be from men, since it has nothing in its whole frame and contrivance that looks like humane policy. And if not from men or by men, we must conclude it certainly is from God; both the doctrine it self and the success of it. We can fix on no lower a cause hereof than the wisdom of heaven, and no less an author than the great God himself.

Had men, remarkably furnish'd with a stock of learning and eloquence, and arm'd with worldly power and authority, been employ'd in spreading the christian faith, the success of it might have

been thought owing to the force of their reasonings; and that persons so generally gave into it from the fear of what they should lose if they refus'd, or the hopes of what they should gain if they complied; and all was owing to the helps and advantages the world afforded to it.

But when we see persons employ'd in this design, labouring under all outward disadvantages, destitute of all worldly power; men of no birth, nor education, nor furnish'd with any uncommon measure of natural gifts, or acquir'd learning, laden with the utmost contempt and reproach, &c.

When such men as these make powerful conquests in the world, obtain the greatest victories over the lusts of men; demolish the strong holds of Satan; prevail with great numbers chearfully to renounce the idolatries in which they had been born and bred, and pay homage to a new Lord, who oblig'd 'em for his sake to quit their worldly interest, and undergo the worst of sufferings: who does not in all this see the finger of God? The discourse and behaviour of the apostles when conven'd before them, surpriz'd their enemies themselves (a). They gaz'd on one another, and wondered, when they saw the boldness of *Peter* and *John*, and knew that in themselves they were ignorant, and illiterate men. They wonder whence these men should have this learning and this courage. But what need that? The thing evidences it self. Whence should they have it but from God? *they had been with Jesus*. Divine wisdom inspir'd and conducted 'em, and they were supported by no less a power. Their doctrine was from heaven, not a fable of their own contriving. It was neither of man, nor by man, and therefore must be from God. The whole design is carried on in methods so very different from, yea, repugnant

(a) Acts 4. 13.

to the ways and thoughts of men, that we must conclude it to be truly divine. God would subdue the world to himself in such a way, that the most obstinate and unbelieving should be made to acknowledge the work was done by himself alone without the art of man.

2. *Reason.* To hide pride from man, that no flesh might glory in his presence. God takes this method to humble the creature, that he may not think of himself above that which is meet. Let not the wise man now glory in his wisdom, what this can invent and contrive, what this can reach and comprehend; nor in his strength, what that can perform. *The very foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God stronger than man.* How foolish does God make the wisdom of man, by discovering what never entered into his head to invent, nor can enter into his heart to comprehend? Having only this resort, because it exceeds his grasp, it shall not command his belief; and not being able to tell how these, and the other things can be, resolves never to believe they are.

The way also of God's propagating the gospel serv'd to hide pride from man. You see, says the apostle, what methods God takes, what men he employs in calling you (a); and who they are, that for the most part are made obedient to the faith of the gospel; Persons of little esteem in the world on the account of their birth, education, learning, wealth, or honour: *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:* And the reason of all is, *that no flesh might glory in his presence* (b). That no man who had the honour to be

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 26. (b) Ver. 29.

employed in calling others, or the happiness to be called himself, shou'd once imagine, that 'tis by any power, or holiness, or wisdom of his own, these extraordinary effects were produc'd; or that he was singled out to be a partaker of this grace, because of any peculiar excellencies in himself above the common level of mankind. The treasure is put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of power and wisdom may be of God and not of man. Man in this glorious conquest shall count himself nothing; as unfit and unlikely to accomplish such a design, as *Gideon's* three hundred men, with nothing but lamps and pitchers, were to rout an army of *Midianites*, like grasshoppers for number. Their enemies themselves thought it so, and insulted them, (as perhaps the men of *Jericho* laughed at seven priests blowing with seven rams-horns to throw down their walls) *what will this babler say (a)?* Are these poor simple and ignorant creatures the men that must turn the world upside-down? must all our learning and power be confounded by them? are these striplings a fit match for the mighty *Goliaths* against whom they are going forth? But thus God orders it, and on purpose that no flesh should (b) glory in his presence.

3. *Reason.* That all the glory of our salvation might be given to God. All the honour shall be ascribed to himself, and none must share it with him. He will have no flesh glory in his presence, *But he that glories let him glory in the Lord (c).* We have this treasure in earthen vessels, The knowledge and ministry of the gospel in persons, frail, weak and contemptible, like *Gideon's* earthen pitchers,

(a) Acts 17. 11. (b) *Hoc modo factum eorum deficit, neque esset sc. Corinthios, igobiles Deus pratulerat nobilibus & sapientibus illis ut superbirent, sed ut in domino gloriari cogerentur, &c.* Beza.
(c) 1 Cor. 1. 31.

that the power which shews it self in the success of our endeavours might evidently appear to be of God ; and he might have all the glory. And when the apostle tells the *Corinthians* that his speech and preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, it was for this reason, that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but the power of God. He wou'd not have it thought, that the spreading of christianity in the world was owing to, or effected meerly by the force of mens arguments, and the strength of their reasonings, but rather the effect of a divine power, that the instrument might be nothing, and God might be all.

I come now in the last place,

IV. To apply what has been said in the following particulars. If this be, as we have heard, the design of God ; then,

Inference. 1. Its highly improbable he should, and injurious to him to suppose he has at any time fram'd a religion, and established therein rites and ceremonies in compliance with, and conformity to the modes and customs of heathen nations. If God has on purpose so order'd things, as to make foolish the wisdom of this world, we have very little reason to believe what some tell us (a), That most of the customs in the Jewish constitution, their tabernacle, temple, feasts, altars, ark, cherubims, sacrifices, expiation, &c. were

(a) *Quid itaque deus sub Vet. Fœdere, non tam p. d. sed & splendide coli, &c. non sua Natura, sed Gentium mori iribendum est. Cum itaque Gentium simulachra, cista, &c. omni cultu & ornatu insignia redderentur ; creditu pronum est, deum Israelitis aureos cherubinos, arcam, &c. concessisse, ne prava amulatio pungeret eorum animos, cum viderent Ethnicorum imagines cistas & sacra alia, ubique splendescere, & pueriles eorum animi cultu simplici & infra superstitionis ethnica pompam subsidente offenderentur. Spencer de leg. Hebræ.*

were in imitation of heathen usages : Nay, that the rise and original of christianity, the very author of it, the mysteries in it, and many of the transactions that attended it, were taken from *Pagan* customs. That christianity to comply with the heathens, much given to admire mysteries in religion, has its mysteries too ; and particularly the incarnation. That because there was a strong inclination in mankind to worship a visible deity ; to comply with this fondness, God appear'd in our nature : And because a notion had commonly obtained amongst 'em concerning the expiation of sin, and appeasing their deities by sacrifice, God was pleas'd so far to comply with this custom, as to make a general atonement by the sacrifice of his son. In a word, That God has very much suited the dispensation of the gospel, and the method of salvation by it, to the common prejudices of mankind, and especially the heathen world.

How little pretence can there be for all this ? What more unprobable and unlikely ? Can we imagine the infinitely wise God hath shaped a religion according to the dictates of the wisdom of this world, when he has on purpose made it foolish, by acting in so many instances perfectly the reverse unto it ?

Inference 2. Hence we have a plain and clear account of that contempt which is poured on the gospel, and whence it is that so many, especially of the great and learned part of the world, rejected it. Men that most excell'd in natural wisdom, have been the greatest despisers of superna-

Hebræ. Lib. 3. p. 221. *Ægyptij ut πολιτῶν ἰτα ἔχοντες Religionem gentis ceteras praeceperunt: eorum Ritus ad alios populos translati, etiam ab Ebræis, (non sine emendatione forsan) usurpati sunt. Ut eluceat hujus assertionis veritas; In disquisitionem veniant eorum Festa; Sacrificia; Sacerdotia; id genus alia, &c.* Marsh. Can. Chron. p. 189.

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tural truths. The *Rabbies* amongst the *Jews*, stumbled at the gospel as weak and mean; the philosophers among the *Gentiles* laughed at it as foolish and absurd. And no wonder, when its whole constitution was so directly opposite to their darling notions, and beloved schemes. God never designed to gain upon mens belief by accomodating himself to their vain humours, sensual appetites, or secular interest; and its not to be wondred at, if their corrupt inclinations disliked the purity of *divine precepts*, as the pride of their understandings despised the simplicity of gospel doctrines. *The natural man receives not the things of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (a).*

Inference 3. Then there is no reason to reject any doctrines that are really and clearly revealed in the gospel, because they are not obvious to our reason, nor fully comprehended by it. The great design of God in the gospel is to exalt his own wisdom and sovereignty, and debase the high thoughts, and carnal reasonings of man, and hence it is, that what appears to us most rational and plausible is not always nearest to truth: nay sometimes, the less there seems to be of humane reason, and probability in some doctrines, and the more strange they are to our natural conceptions, the greater impress there is of a divine authority upon them. These are things to be believed upon the credit of him that reveals them, and not to be entertained or rejected as they agree with, or differ from the mould of our reason. What if there are some things which exceed our grasp, and too deep for us to fathom? God hereby shews us the shortness of our line;

(a) 1 Cor. 2. 14.

and by revealing what so much exceeds its comprehension, makes foolish the wisdom of this world.

Inference 4. Its no wonder then, that the great apostle did, and others with him do, desire and determine in their preaching to know nothing so much as, nothing but Christ and him crucified. This indeed is foolishness in the account of worldly wisdom. Be it so, says the apostle, *I determined nevertheless to know nothing among you (a),* you wise, you learned *Corinthians*, nothing but, nothing so much as this despised doctrine of Christ and him crucified. This is the doctrine which does, and always shall triumph in all my discourses, and which I am assured will ever gain the greatest triumphs in the world. By this very doctrine it is, That God makes foolish the wisdom of this world. And compared with this, I despise all the Pharisaical wisdom of the *Jews*, and the philosophical learning of the *Greeks*. (b) Plain scripture truths have something in them more convincing than all rational arguments; such a power as is not easily resisted. Rational arguments are refell'd by reason, and its hard to convince a man by these methods who is equally master of reason with our selves; whereas divine truths make their own way, act upon us with a secret power, and press the mind with an irresistible strength, not only perswading, but almost forcing an assent. To which purpose that passage in ecclesiastical history has been often referred to, which I'll here give you in the words of the formention'd author, 'Upon the convening of the council of *Nice*, and the appearing of the christian bishops there, several of the heathen philosophers offered themselves among them,

(a) 1 Cor. 2. 2.

(b) *Reflections upon Learning*, p. 242.

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intending to signalize themselves upon so great an occasion, by attacking the faith in its most eminent professors, and by endeavouring to overthrow it by philosophy and reason. To this end several conferences were held upon the principles of reason, by the most noted men of either party, in which one of the philosophers, more forward than the rest, begun to grow insolent upon a suppos'd advantage, and must needs triumph before the victory: An aged bishop took fire at this, one who had been a confessor in the late persecution, and was more noted for his faith than his learning; philosophy he had none, but encounters his adversary in a new manner in the name of Jesus, and by the word of God; and with a few plain weapons drawn from thence, he humbled the pride of this arrogant philosopher, and straightway leads him captive to the font. All the reply our philosopher had left him, was, that while he was encountred by philosophy, and human learning, he defended himself the same way, but being attack'd by higher reasons, it was necessary for him to yield himself up to the power of God (a).

Inference 5. We should hence learn to exercise great humility, and not think of our selves, and our own wisdom above that which is meet. God hath stain'd the pride and glory of man; *he will have no flesh glory in his presence.* The wise man must not glory in his wisdom, his natural, his corrupted reason, a thing he is too prone to do in such flights as these. Great is the Goddes's Reason; I only yield to Reason: Reason shall be the supreme judge, and Philosophy the highest prin-

(a) *Reflections upon Learning*, p. 243.

ciple ; nothing shall be received but what this comprehends.

But is God's ocean to be emptied by our shell ? or his depths to be sounded by our line ? are not his ways and thoughts as far above ours, as the heavens are above the earth ? must we be reasoned out of revelation, and run into a natural religion ?

Let us not deceive our selves by a vain conceit of our own wisdom. If any man among you seem to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise. Let us adore the wisdom of God in the way of salvation by a crucified Christ. What if this be a laughing-stock to some, and a stumbling-block to others, to them that are saved it's the wisdom and power of God. That glorious dispensation wherein he magnifies his power, and displays his wisdom in such a manner as to make foolish the wisdom of this world. This may teach us modesty, and keep us humble.

Inference 6. If, God has revealed those things to us by which he makes foolish the wisdom of this world, we have abundant cause to adore the riches and sovereignty of his grace. To some, as our Saviour tells his disciples, *Its given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to others it's not given* (a). Has God then given you eyes to see what others know not ? do you behold the glory of God's wisdom and power in this constitution as far superiour to all the designs and contrivances of men ? hath God revealed those things to you which the natural man receiveth not, nor can know whilst he is so, because to him they are foolishness ? Then imitate the son of God in giving thanks to his father for this inestimable favour, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou*

(a) Mat. 13. 11.

hast hid these things from the wise and prudent (a); from men that excel in the wisdom of this world, and are therefore highly conceited of their own knowledge, and hast revealed 'em unto babes; to men of weaker capacities, and that have more humble and meaner thoughts of themselves. Even so father, so it seemed good in thy sight. 'This can never arise from any worth or excellency in them above others, but is purely the effect of God's sovereign pleasure, That no flesh should glory in his presence, but he that glories might glory in the Lord.

(a) Mat. 11. 25.



F

Zeal



*Zeal for God's House, express'd
in a Holy Resolution not to
forsake it.*

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D AT

Little St. *HELLENS*.

MAY 28, 1715.

NEHEM. X. 39.

— *And we will not forsake the House of our God.*



His book carries on the jewish history after the return of that people into their own land, from a seventy years captivity in *Babylon*; and among other things, relates the several grievances of which they justly complain'd, and the gross corruptions by which a righteous God was highly provoked; together with the redress and reformation of both: The latter
of

of these is accounted for at large, in this and the foregoing chapter, where we see how they were stir'd up to a sense of their duty, by the arguments and example (as we may reasonably suppose) of *Nehemiah*, their excellent governour, of whom their own historian gives this character, *That he was a man born to justice and virtue; and towards his country and people most affectionate and beneficent* (a). Its very probable by the influence and authority of this great man, (who in all things sought their welfare) a day of solemn fasting and prayer was appointed, to recognize the mercies of God; to confess their own sins, to humble themselves for what had been or was amiss, and resolve upon a thoro' reformation for the time to come. Accordingly they enter into covenant with God and one another; to the performance of which, they bind themselves by the most sacred ties and engagements; for they agree to write it down that they might have recourse to it upon all occasions, and it might be a witness against 'em if ever they should act contrary to it.

Having done this, several of them in the name of the rest, set their hands and seals to it, and all of 'em confirmed it with an oath and a curse.

This chapter is wholly employ'd in telling us the names of the persons that subscribed and sealed this covenant, together with the tenour of it in general, and the particular articles, to the performance of which they obliged themselves.

The subscribers of this covenant and they that seal'd it, were *Nehemiah* the *Tirshatha*, with many others, whose names are particularly mentioned, and make a noble figure in this history: with these concurred the rest of the people, the priests and

(a) Ἡ δὲ εὐγένεια καὶ τὴν φύσιν καὶ δικαιοσύνην, καὶ περὶ τῆς οὐρανίου φιλοτιμότητος. Joseph. Ant. i. q. Jud. lib. x. cap. 5.

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Levites, porters and singers, and all that had separated themselves from the people of the land to the law of their God (a).

The articles of this covenant shew that they laid no other burden upon themselves than those necessary things to which they were already obliged by all the ties of interest, duty and gratitude: that they would be zealous and active in their endeavours to revive decay'd religion, and reform all abuses; that they would walk in God's law, and do his commandments: in a word, they covenant against the sins they had formerly lived in the commission of, and oblige themselves to the performance of those duties they had heretofore too much neglected, concluding all with this pious resolution, *And we will not forsake the house of our God.*

I shall briefly consider these words as they relate to the *Jews* at that time, and then shew how serviceable they may be to our present design.

As they stand in this history, they are a devout and holy resolution never to forsake the house which was then built for the worship of God.

The house of God was once the tabernacle at *Shiloh* (b), where the ark continued about three hundred and twenty five years. This house God at length forsook, *even the tent which he placed among men, delivering his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hands* (c).

After this, the house of God was the temple at *Jerusalem*; to this house God confin'd a great part of his worship; here he promised to meet and bless his people, to manifest his glory, and make his abode. This house they had seen in ruins, being burnt down to the ground by the king of the *Chaldees*. Then the *ways of Zion* mourn'd; for none came to the solemn feasts; her adversaries saw it, and mocked

(a) V. 28. (b) Josh. 18. 1. (c) Psal. 78. 60, 61.

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at her sabbaths; yea the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger; and cast down from heaven to the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger (a). For he was forely displeas'd with his people, and had indignation against *Jerusalem* threescore and ten years; but he was now become jealous for Zion with a great jealousy, and was return'd to *Jerusalem* with mercy, and gathered those that had been sorrowful for the solemn assembly, to whom the reproach of it had been a burden.

The poor captives being return'd to *Jerusalem* with license to build God's house, and a full liberty to attend his worship, they now resolve never to forsake it. The sense of which resolution may be given in this short paraphrase. 'We do here solemnly covenant with God and one another, that
' we will never be guilty of idolatry, as we and
' our fathers have been; that we will no more for-
' sake the temple, for any high places that had been
' built and frequented heretofore; so far from this,
' we will not fail as we have opportunity to fre-
' quent this place but constantly attend upon the
' worship of God in it; and not only so, but we
' further oblige our selves to provide all things ne-
' cessary for the service and worship to be performed
' therein. Such a zeal then inspired their souls for the house of God.

Having taken this view of the words as they relate to the Jews, I shall now consider them as instructive to us, and shew, *First*, that it is a resolution well becoming christians themselves, not to forsake the house of their God. *Secondly*, that it's not only lawful, but may be useful, and of great advantage in distinct societies to oblige and engage our selves hereunto. And then, *Thirdly*, offer reasons

(a) 2 Chron. 36. 19.

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both for making this resolution, and then obliging our selves to make it good. From this instance before us we may gather.

First, That it's a resolution worthy of and well becoming christians themselves, *not to forsake the house of their God.* The same zeal and affection which this people expressed to the temple, should be manifested by us to the church and ordinances of Christ: that house was the material temple at *Jerusalem*, the centre of their unity, the place whither the tribes were to resort, and where all their males of competent years were bound at certain times and seasons to appear.

Under the gospel there is no such house unto which all are obliged to repair, and any parts of divine worship are confined. But there is frequent mention of that in the new testament under the metaphor of an house (with allusion no doubt unto the temple) which it should be our resolution also never to forsake. This is not a material building, as the temple was, made by men's hands, of wood and stones, of silver and gold, and cedar work; but a mystical building, a spiritual house, whose maker is the living God, and whose materials are living stones: *whose house are we (a): q. d.* I have been speaking of a house, in which Christ was faithful as a son; and will now strip the words of their metaphor, and tell you in plainer terms, by this house I mean the church of God, as it is composed of the faithful in all ages and places of the world; comprehending his worship and ordinances, with all the concerns of his kingdom, and interests among men. This is that house which we should resolve never to forsake. There is doubtless much more intended than is expressed in such forms of

(a) Heb. 3. 6.

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ſpeech, and in its full extent, this reſolution comprehends the three following particulars.

First, That we will never caſt off the profeſſion of our faith, nor make a defection from the truths and ways of the goſpel for any cauſe and upon any account whatſoever : its ſo rare a thing for a nation to change their Gods (tho' really no Gods) that the prophet challenges his people to produce a ſingle inſtance of its being ever done, *Hath a nation changed their Gods (a) ?* tell, if you can, when and where it was once done ! where is the nation among the heathens that ever did it ? they have too great a veneration for their Gods, too high an opinion of 'em ever to change 'em : but to the everlaſting reproach of *Iſrael, they had changed their glory for that which did not profit.* They that were the only people under heaven who had no cauſe to change their God, were of all others the people that had done it.

Now it's this defection from the true God and his worſhip, which this people covenanted againſt in the reſolution of the text. And agreeably to to this, we alſo ſhould reſolve againſt all defection from the true God ; that we will not forſake him nor deal falſly in his covenant ; that we will never apoſtatize from the commands and inſtitutions of the bleſſed Jeſus, but cleave to the Lord with a full purpoſe of heart, &c. This we muſt do if we will approve our ſelves indeed the houſe of God ; *For his houſe, ſays the apoſtle, are we, if we hold faſt the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm to the end (b) ;* if we do not only make an open profeſſion of the truth for a time, but are ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in it to the end, it then appears that we are indeed living ſtones in God's ſpiritual temple.

Secondly, That we will not neglect the ordinances

(a) Jer. 2. 11. (b) Heb. 3. 6.

of divine worship, nor be wanting in our attendance on them, whenever we are called and have the opportunity of appearing before God in his house. Thus much is contained in this resolution of these devout and reforming Jews; they would be so far from making a defection from the true God, that they oblige themselves to frequent his temple, and resolve they will not, thro' sloth or covetousness, much less thro' prophaneness and contempt of sacred institutions, disuse the house and worship of God, but constantly appear in the temple at the stated times of worship.

And the same should be our resolution with respect to the house and worship of God under the gospel; we certainly are under no less obligations to frequent christian assemblies and keep up publick worship than they were; we stand in as much need of these helps and advantages as they did. Concerning this, let the following particulars be observed;

First, Jesus Christ as Lord of his own house, has appointed divers ordinances to be observed in his church; viz. Prayer and praise to be offered up to God; the word to be preached, and sacraments to be administered. None has power to add unto, or take from these: It's a bold invasion of his just right and prerogative to pretend to either.

Secondly, There must be an assembly of people meeting together for the publick administration of these holy ordinances. The certain and determinate number is no where prescribed, but so many there must be, as will make it publick worship.

Thirdly, There must be some proper and convenient places appointed and agreed upon for such religious assemblies, where they can be had. Places where prayer, (with other parts of religious worship) is wont to be made. I shall not interrupt the thread of this discourse, nor raise a dust in our passage

passage by disputing, what are the places where these ordinances are duly administred and ought to be attended. Some are for worshipping in these places, and others say, this is the place where men ought to worship; and no worship will be acceptable in any other. Some have learned to condemn all assemblies but their own, and every way of worship but what agree's with their's. Here I shall not interpose, but leave it to every man's conscience, where (according to the best light he can get) he thinks himself obliged ordinarily to worship God; what the places are where God is served in a way most agreeable to the rules of his word, where he may expect most of God's presence, and has found, or may hope to find, the greatest advantage to himself. To proceed,

Fourthly, There are particular times and seasons for the holding these religious assemblies. Reason tells us, if God is to be worshipped, there must be a set time for it. These seasons are either stated and fixed on the day appropriated to the worship of God, or occasional on some of our own six days. Which day of the week is designed, and ought to be observed for this stated worship, is not agreed among all those that yet are heartily affected to the worship of God it self. Some do zealously, and with great warmth contend, that this is the seventh day of the week; we think since our Saviour's resurrection, the first day of the week to be the christian sabbath; the commemoration of the work of redemption, having taken place of that of creation; but neither shall I here enter upon this controversy, but proceed to observe,

Fifthly, There are certain persons, whose work and duty it is, to go before others in these holy administrations. Such as do not take this honour to themselves, but are really called of God. Who they are that have this authority I list not now to contend.

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contend. Some do determine it entirely in their own favour, and have the charity as well as modesty to null all administrations besides their own; but it's a small matter with us to be judged of man's judgment: he that judges us, that has a right to do it, and will do it righteously is the Lord, to whose judgment we stand or fall.

To return then; this worship, these ordinances, and assemblies we should resolve never to forsake, but as we have opportunity, constantly attend upon, and thereby express our duty to God, our zeal for his house, and our delight in his service.

Thirdly, That we will promote as far as in us lies the interests of religion, and spread the kingdom of Christ in the world. It argues a meanness of soul, to say nothing worse of it, to be seeking every man his own things, his own ease and pleasure, his own advantage and reputation in the world: and it's a narrowness of soul, no ways conformable to Christ's example, or the spirit of the gospel, to confine that concern we have for others, within the scanty limits of a particular party of men: this is like seeking the good only of one street in a city, or one town in a nation. It was *David's* generous resolution, because of the house of God which was there, to seek the good of all *Jerusalem*. *Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good, O Jerusalem(a)*, the good of the whole city, not one particular street only; and, like him, we ought to be of publick spirits, and seek a general good. Tho' christians next us, and more immediately under our care and within our reach, may be the objects of our more applied endeavours and concern, yet it's not the good of this or that particular church and society only, but the whole interest of Christ as opposed to the devil's

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kingdom in the world, whose welfare and prosperity we are bound to seek.

We should carry on generous designs for God, study how we may most effectually promote his interest in the world, and desire to spread the favour of Christ's knowledge the most diffusely amongst men; not only resolve to attend the worship of God our selves, but give others an opportunity of doing so too; and this by promoting the preaching of the everlasting gospel, that glorious chariot in which the Redeemer is carried thro' the world, and by which salvation is brought to men's doors. Having seen what is contained in this resolution; I proceed to observe from hence,

Secondly, That it's not only lawful, but may be useful and expedient for christians in societies to engage themselves to God, and the duties they owe to him and one another. This people agreed together as one man, and bound themselves by a solemn covenant which was written, and subscribed, sealed and sworn to, *That they would never forsake the house of the Lord their God*, but constantly attend upon the publick worship, and do every thing that was necessary for it's support. Whether a national covenant for such purposes amongst christians, may be supported by this instance, is a question I have no inclination to meddle with; nor will I pretend to determine how far this may warrant an explicit covenant in particular churches; having no call on this occasion to enter into any such controversy. Nor do I suppose the parallel is to be run so far, as to make it necessary from hence, for all christians to enter themselves into express covenants that must be wrote down, signed, sealed, &c. and I am sure much less am I encouraging any confederacies with political views that may be dangerous to states and governments, and give any umbrage to rulers and civil magistrates. Our religion
neither

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neither teaches nor allows any such thing. What I would gather from this instance is, that as this people did, christians may voluntarily agree together, and engage themselves in particular societies to carry on a work for God in such a way as is warranted by his word, and judged by themselves most likely to promote some valuable end; suppose that of reforming mens lives, or that of instructing children and youth, or to encourage the preaching of the gospel, and an attendance on the worship of God, which last is the design of this society as the two former are of some others.

The lawfulness of this, I think, cannot be questioned when we consider,

The way in which our personal consent to God's covenant is express'd. Its prophecied by *Isaiah*, that in gospel times, converts in great numbers should resign themselves to the Lord, incorporate with one another; and this in so solemn a manner, that it should be as if they subscribed an agreement with their hand. *One shall say I am the Lord's, another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord* (a).

This further appears from the nature of God's institutions. *Our baptism* is a sacramental oath, or vow to walk before God in all holy obedience, to be faithful to his service and never forsake it. This engagement is renewed in the Lord's supper, wherein we publickly engage to stand to our covenant. Now if God thought such a course necessary for us, why may we not upon occasion, use some of the like methods to confirm and strengthen us in the work of obedience.

(a) *Isa.* 44 5.

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Moreover, if the practice of the saints and people of God under the old testament, be any direction to us in this case, it is abundantly warranted from thence; for we have divers instances of that nature, all recorded for our instruction; as, 2 Chron. 15. 12, 13. 2 Chron. 34. 31.

The expediency and advantage of this is the next thing to be made out; but this may be very properly thrown into the following head. To which I proceed; viz.

Thirdly, to offer reasons both for making this resolution, and obliging our selves to make it good.

1st. Why should we resolve not to forsake the house of our God, but do what we can for the support of his interest and worship; for so much as has been observed, is included in this resolution.

Reason I. Because it is God's house. Every thing that's his shou'd be sacred and dear to us. Now its his house we are to frequent, they are his ordinances on which we attend; It's his word that's preached and heard; and his interest we oblige our selves to support. They carry his image and superscription; this gives 'em their worth and value, and is a sufficient reason why we shou'd not forsake 'em. Its the house of the eternal God, the author of our beings and blessedness; whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve; from whom we have received, and for whom we shou'd employ all our powers and capacities; its the service of one we shall never have any cause to complain of; whose commands put no hardships, and whose promises we are sure will put no fallacies upon us. Sure the house, the interest and service of such a God, how much soever despis'd and neglected by others, shou'd be dear to us, and deserves our attendance.

This

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This is the greatest good upon earth; for the honour of the ever-blessed God, the effects of Christ's blood, and the concerns of his kingdom, are all embark'd in this bottom; and what is so dear to God, shou'd always lye near the hearts of his people.

This general reason involves many particulars in it. Since its God's house, we shou'd resolve not to forsake it. Because,

First, This would be to forsake our own mercies, and deprive our selves of the most valuable blessing in the whole world. Should we desert the service of God, and turn aside to lying vanities, we should act as contrary to our interest as our duty. This would be to stand in our own light, and turn our back upon our own happiness. For in God's house,

We are sure to meet with the truest pleasure and satisfaction: Its promised to those that joyn themselves to the Lord, and serve him, that he will bring them into his holy mountain, and *make them joyful in his house of prayer.* They that come sorrowing to God's house, shall be sent away rejoicing to their own; and according to God's promise is the church's experience. *I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his Fruit was sweet to my taste.* David upon this account professes to all the world, *That a day in God's court is better to him than a thousand elsewhere;* and therefore all his wishes were summed up in this one, *That he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his holy temple.* Such a pleasure had he in attending on publick worship. So that to forsake the house of God, wou'd be to deprive our selves of that, which to a renewed mind is the most agreeable entertainment in the world. Again,

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In this house we may expect to find the greatest benefit and advantage : It's here we may promise our selves spiritual light, life, strength, peace, comfort and soul-refreshment. It's in this house we may hope to have our doubts resolved, our darkness scattered, and temptations most effectually vanquished. The ordinances of God's house are intended for our establishment and growth in grace ; to improve us in faith, love and holiness ; to work us into a greater conformity to God's image, and give us a farther meetness for his kingdom. So that if we desert this house, we forsake our own mercies and are our own greatest enemies ; by this course its certain we hinder our spiritual profit and advantage, lose many useful instructions in matters of religion ; and deprive our selves of those exhortations that are needful to quicken us in the way of our duty, to establish us in grace, and prepare us for glory. Once more,

In this house we may expect to meet with that which will prove the firmest and most effectual support to us under all the troubles of life, and at the near approach of death. In our secret retirements, we may hope to have communion with God ; but it's in the sanctuary, in the solemn assembly, we may expect the clearest manifestations of him, the brightest views of his glory, the sweetest tastes of his love, and the most sensible experience of his power ; all which are designed for our comfort and support, whilst we are passing thro' the world, and when we are parting with it. So that to forsake this house, is to cut our selves off from our chief and only support in times of danger and distress.

Secondly, To leave this house, is to forsake the place which God himself hath chosen, and where he delights to dwell. *The Lord loves the gates*

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gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob (a). Concerning Zion, the gospel church, it's said, *God hath chosen it, he hath desired it for his habitation: This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell for I have desired it (b).* So that for us to desert this house, is to forsake a place where God himself delights to be, where he has promised to vouchsafe his presence, and command his blessing. Than which nothing can be more foolish, as well as impious; for is it not good for us to be near to God? has he said here will I dwell, and shou'd not we for that reason say, here will we dwell? We will never forsake that house which God himself has desired for his habitation; that which he hath said shall be his rest for ever, shall be our dwelling all the days of our lives.

Thirdly, To forsake this house, is to forsake God himself: We cannot quit the inheritance of the Lord, but in effect we go and serve other Gods. If we desert his house, decline his worship and ordinances, he interprets it a forsaking of himself, which is a sin that exposes us to the reproach of the heathens themselves, as being more firm to their false Gods, then we are to the true one (c). But above all, this is what exposes us to the severest resentments of an offended God, and must certainly be attended with consequences fatal to our selves. Should we forsake the house of God, and desert the assemblies of his people; whither and to whom shall we go? To what houses will they resort, that have once forsaken God's house? With what company will they associate, and in what assemblies may we expect to find those that have renounced the communion of saints? When they fall off from Christ, who can they fall in with, but sinners? Satan's Agents and Emissaries gather them up, and make an easy prey of them. The

(a) Psal. 87. 2. (b) Psal. 132. 13, 14. (c) 1 Sam. 26. 19.

devil stands ready to sieze them for his own, when ever they wander from Christ's fold. *If a man abide not in me, says our Saviour, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned*(a). He is deprived of the special favour and protection of God; thrown out of the hearts, the prayers and society of his people, withers away and comes to nothing in the end: his early goodness is but as an early dew that soon passes away; and being left to himself, he is drawn into the communion of sinners, has his fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and grows worse and worse till he runs into open impieties and a scandalous conversation. This comes of forsaking God's house! This is the end of all apostates! Whoever draws back does it at the price of his soul: his final apostacy will be to his eternal perdition (b); God has declared in the most awful manner, that such men above all others are the abhorrence of his soul, and as this sin is so highly provoking to him, it will be sure to meet with a punishment proportionable to its guilt.

Reason II. *Because our particular good is lodg'd in the publick interest.* In seeking this we seek our selves. At the same time that we discharge our duty, we consult our interest. All our comfort and happiness flows from the house of God; and therefore for our own sakes, we ought to seek its welfare. *Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord; the Lord shall bless thee out of Zion* (c). Thy pious concern for his glory, shall be rewarded with blessings that come out of Zion: which are always the best blessings, because such as flow from special favour, and are not the effects of a common providence. Pray for the

(a) Joh. 15. 6.

(b) Heb. 10.

(c) Psa. 128. 4, 5.

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peace of *Jerusalem* (a). Bear it upon your hearts, whenever you are upon your knees: sooner let your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, and your right-hand forget her art, than you should not remember *Jerusalem*; if you can do nothing else yet pray for her; pray for her peace and purity, her preservation and prosperity; and for our encouragement it's promised, *They shall prosper that love her*, and in this manner express their affection to that dear place. A prayer, tho' but a prayer sent to heaven on *Jerusalem's* errand, shall come back like *Noah's* dove, with an olive-branch of peace in its mouth. No service performed to Christ, shall lose its reward. No man shall kindle a fire on God's altar, or shut a door in his house for nought. We shall certainly find our own advantage, in a conscientious concern for the publick good. It's then likely to go well with our own houses, when due care is taken that it may go well with God's house. *Those that honour him, he will honour, but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed* (b). The memory of those generous souls that sought a publick good shall be blessed, and their names had in everlasting remembrance: when the names of those low spirited creatures that lived for nothing but themselves, shall be utterly forgotten, or mentioned only with contempt and disgrace.

Reason III. This is the noblest way of imitating the great God himself, and conforming to the example of his son our blessed Saviour.

Its one of the brightest characters of the divine being, that he is good and doth good; *Thou art good O Lord and thou doest good* (c). To be like God is our truest glory, and shou'd be our highest ambition; now wherein are we more like him, than in answering this character; in being

(a) Ps. 122. 6. (b) 1 Sam. 2. 30. (c) Psal. 119. 68.

good our selves, and doing good to others? It was *Abraham's* glory to be blessed himself, and made a blessing to the world. I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing (a). There is nothing in which we come nearer to God, than this of being a diffusive Good; useful to the world, and publick blessings to mankind.

Herein also we imitate the shining example of our blessed Saviour, of whom it's written, *The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up* (b). His anger at the prophanation of the temple, rose up to an holy indignation. His languor of soul, and warm concern for God's honour, exhausted his spirits, and dried up his natural moisture. This swallowed up all his private regards; he forgets himself, and seems to neglect his own safety, that he might secure his father's honour: and by our zeal for God's house, we shew the same mind to be in us, that was in him.

A soul that's not confined to himself, nor his own private interests; but looks out, and thinks what he may do for God; that has no narrow contracted views, but enlarged desires, and unbounded schemes for publick service, is indeed a God-like soul: For the supreme good is most diffusive of it self: and the more spreading our usefulness is, the more we look like God.

Moses valued not his own family, compared with God's Israel, and therefore refused to have that raised to a nation, upon the condition of their being no longer a people. *Ne hemiah* was himself in an honourable post, but greatly afflicted at *Jerusalem's* low estate, and ventures the loss of his prince's favour, to serve the interests of his dear people. And *Hester* generously resolv'd

(a) Gen. 12. 2.

(b) Psal. 69. 9.

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to solícite for the lives of others, tho' it were at the hazard of her own.

Reason IV. This makes men real blessings to the world. However they may be esteemed by others, they really are the strength and security of a nation; the stay and support of the publick interest: They bear up the pillars of the earth, and keep it from being quite dissolved. It's for their sakes, God sometimes preserves others from those Judgments which their crying sins wou'd otherwise pull down upon their guilty heads. *Sodom* had been preserved for the sake of ten righteous persons, could so many have been found in the place.

A number of serious persons, that are themselves truly religious, and have the interest of religion at heart, that are filled with zeal for God and his house, and are a praying generation; that can and do wrestle with God for his people, that give him no rest day nor night, till he establish *Jerusalem*: These are really the support of a state, and save things from running to decay and ruin. Others call them the troublers of the land, and like *Haman* can't enjoy themselves, unless they are rooted out of the earth; but they are really the *Chariots of Israel, and horsemen thereof. The holy seed is the substance thereof*, and the innocent delivers the island. Good men are a publick good, and others fare the better for them, whether they are aware of it, and will acknowledge it or no. *As new wine is in the cluster, and one saith destroy it not, a blessing is in it: So will I do for my servants sake, that I may not destroy them all (a)*; he spares the rest for the sake of his servants, the righteous ones among them. Many of

(a) Isa. 63. 8.

these may have no opportunity of serving their country in a publick capacity; their circumstances are too narrow to admit it; or they are unskilful in affairs of this nature, and destitute of that worldly wisdom and policy which is necessary for persons intrusted with the management of publick affairs: Or they may be laid under an incapacity by the laws of the land, and singled out from the rest of their fellow-subjects as not fit to be trusted by those in power; but still in a private capacity, and especially when joyned with others, they may carry on noble and useful designs for God, and may be of great service to their country. And it is usually a sign of mercy to a people, when God opens and enlarges the hearts of others, and stirs up any number of persons to form societies for spreading useful knowledge, and to promote reformation and serious godliness.

Reason V. This will be our rejoycing and comfort another day. We shall never have cause to repent of any service we do for Christ and his interest in the world. It will be no grief of heart to us hereafter, to have employed those powers and capacities in the service of religion, which others have lavished away upon things perishing in themselves, and destructive to their owners. *Nehemiah* reflected with a great deal of comfort and satisfaction, upon what he had done for the house of his God; It pleased him to think he had been any way instrumental to revive and support religion in his country, and he humbly appeals to God concerning the honesty of his intention in all he had done: *Remember me O my God for this!*

How uneasy must the reflections of an awakned conscience be hereafter, in those that all their days have done nothing for God? that sought

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only themselves, their own ease, pleasure and advantage; spent all their time, and care, and thoughts for the advancement of their own interest; that loved none, and lived to none but themselves: And on the other hand, with what comfort may we reflect upon a life laid out for God, and talents employed in his service? How comfortable then to have the testimony of our consciences, and to be able to say, 'I have not been like an empty vine, nor lived an unprofitable burthen on the earth; God's service hath been my work, and his glory my end, I have finished my course and served my generation; whatever came upon me, yet I have not forgotten God, nor dealt falsely in his covenant. This will cause the face to shine, and the heart to rejoyce.

Only when we have done all this, we must acknowledge we are but unprofitable servants, and shall see need to pray as *Nehemiah* did, *remember me O my God, for this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.* It is not for us to speak of our good deeds in a way of pride and boasting; much less are we to depend upon them as our righteousness before God, as if what we had done, merited a reward at his hands; for our best actions need sparing mercy.

Secondly, I come to offer reason for obliging ourselves to this duty, and agreeing together, to encourage and attend the worship of God.

Reason I. Such engagements are necessary because of the deceitfulness and inconstancy of our hearts. The holy Ghost tells us, and our own Experience sadly witnesses to the truth of it, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, &c. There is that wickedness in our hearts, which we donot suspect, and are not aware of. And this never appears so much as in an hour of temptation;

tation; then their deceitfulness shews its self, and their corrupt dispositions break forth. We are then turned aside like a deceitful bow, which promised fair, and seemed likely to send the arrow to the mark, but when drawn, breaks, and drops it at the archer's foot. There's no depending on their promises and professions: This being the case, sure no man that's honest will startle at engagements, nor will he that considers this fickleness and instability of his own heart, think them needless. A sincere soul reckons he never can be bound fast enough, and therefore desires to put himself under the strictest ties and the most sacred engagements to God; yea, and finds all little enough, indeed, too little without the special aid of divine grace to keep him steadfast.

Reason II. Such engagements will help to fix us more firmly in the interests of religion, and make us more successful in resisting all temptations to apostacy. There are those difficulties and discouragements arising in the course of our obedience, which tend not only to hinder our progress in it, but wholly to divert us from it, and prevail upon us to turn back, and walk no more therein. A thousand things start up and tell us, there's a lion in the way, if you go forward you will be slain; therefore never think of making any further progress, it will but expose you to danger, you run the hazard of your reputation, your interest, and it may be your very lives. Spare your selves, and retreat while you may: now that we may be the better fortified against these suggestions, and put by the force of such assaults, it will be very proper to bind our selves to the Lord and one another; then shall we have to answer him that would thus seduce us from our duty, 'I have lift up my hand to the most high God, and cannot go back; we are under covenant engage-

'ments to the Lord; we have sworn that we will
 'keep God's judgments, and will never go con-
 'trary to the oath we have taken, but must and
 'will perform it. I cannot go back without con-
 'tracting the utmost guilt upon my own soul, and
 'shall certainly incur the highest displeasure of
 'that God who will revenge the quarrel of his
 'covenant; for he that deserts a service is sure to
 'meet with a punishment which he escapes that
 'was never list'd into it. How then can I do
 'this wickedness and sin against the most sacred
 'vows and engagements? I cannot, I will not do
 'it, *Get thee behind me Satan.*

Reason III. Because hereby we are rendred more
 capable of serving the interests of religion. A
 force when united becomes the stronger. They
 that are ready to call themselves dry trees, from
 whom little or no fruit can be expected; that com-
 plain they are but cyphers in the world, and make
 no figure among their neighbours; all that they can
 do is very inconsiderable, and stands for next to no-
 thing. These indeed taken alone, and considered
 in a single capacity can do very little; yet when
 joyned with others, and formed into regular socie-
 ties, may be of singular service in promoting the
 interest of religion, and united into one collective
 body, may carry on some excellent and very use-
 ful designs in the world. The joint concurrence
 of many, gives a great advantage to such a de-
 sign, and a better prospect of success. To con-
 clude this argument,

We may learn such a practice from other socie-
 ties, formed to promote very different ends: some
 for the encouragement of trade, which no body
 looks upon with an evil eye, and if prudently ma-
 naged, may answer some good purposes. There
 are others, for propagating the gospel abroad; and
 why

why may there not be some also for promoting religion at home?

Wicked men very frequently act in bands and troops for the service of their head and prince: we read of some that boasted they had made a covenant with death, and were at an agreement with hell. It has been said (for my own part I know nothing of it but by report) that young men in several parts of this city, have formed themselves into little cabals, for the strengthening one anothers hands in wickedness; and shall none of the same age form themselves into societies for promoting religion? Others, we are told have their private clubs and meetings, on purpose to propagate notions that undermine religion, and are subversive of christianity; and shall it be a crime to have meetings whose design it is to support and defend the truths of the gospel? We know that a certain number of *Jews* more than forty, banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, neither to eat nor drink till they had killed *Paul*; an innocent person, that never did them any harm. And in our own time, had we not a conspiracy formed by some of the worst of men, against the life of one of the best of kings? pretty near such a number, and much such a set of men, (perfectly lost to all sense of humanity and honour,) banded together, (as they did) in a league, to murder the late king *William*, in the barbarous and cowardly way of assassination. But the wakeful providence of God, discovered their black design, and preserved that precious life, to procure for us that, for which some will never forgive him, and we ought never to forget him; but bless his memory, which they for this very reason, so like themselves, curse upon all occasions. You will easily understand I mean by this, the protestant succession in the house of our present sovereign king *George*, whose birthday

day you have made choice of for this annual meeting, and we observe with a peculiar pleasure.

These made a vow the bond of their iniquity, and is it not lawful in some cases to learn of an enemy? shall not their zeal for the devil's interest provoke ours for God's house? shall there be societies for perpetrating the most horrid villanies, and to encourage the worst of evils; and shall not religious persons act in concert for God, and form designs for the Redeemer's service, and the salvation of those souls that are the price of his blood?

I have now done with the words themselves, and shall in a few things apply my self to you of this Society, whose names are subscribed to this religious, and I hope useful undertaking. Your's is the only Society (that I know) of this kind among us; You have voluntarily engag'd to attend the publick worship early on the Lord's-day mornings yourselves, and to give others an opportunity of doing so too; that the sabbath might be sanctified in the beginning of it by a morning lecture, as well as towards its close by evening lectures.

I perswade my self this proceeds from a true well guided zeal for God; that this put you upon beginning, and still excites you to continue this morning exercise. May you see some good fruit of such designs for God and souls, to your abundant comfort and joy.

For which end allow me to be your remembrancer in a few things.

First, See that your aims and views herein are sincere. Be careful not to interweave any carnal counsels and selfish projects of your own into this design. Do nothing herein for the applause of men, and to be taken notice of by others, or meerly to serve a party. Banish these things at the utmost distance from your society. Let your consciences bear you witness that your aims are purely at
God's

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God's glory, and a publick good. That the society is calculated for the advancement of religion in general, and not to serve the interests of any one particular party of men.

Secondly, Be your selves religious: really and exemplarily so. Do nothing I beseech you unworthy your society; give others no occasion to reproach you with the want of religion your selves, who set up for the promoting of it in others: but be examples of that religion you are desirous to encourage. Manage all with such prudence, that your own private affairs may in nothing suffer hereby; nor your zeal for this publick exercise be reproached with a neglect of family duties. In a word, let no root of bitterness spring up to trouble and defile you, and tempt others to think and speak ill both of you and your design.

Thirdly, Be true to your engagements: make good this resolution not to forsake the house of the Lord your God. I do not mean by this, that you are so tied up to any particular society, that you may not be at liberty to withdraw where there's a justifiable occasion; circumstances may vary, and render it inconvenient and improper for us to continue therein any longer. But our covenant engagements with God, can never be dispensed with; having bound our selves to the Lord we must never go back. As to this, it should be our fixed resolution, that we will never forsake the house of our God.

And as to any particular design we are engaged in, for the service of religion, we should not easily and slightly drop it. Resolve not to do this,

Thro' sloth and idleness. . This loses some the former part, especially of the Lord's days worship; they cannot break thro' some inconveniences from the way or weather, nor prevail with themselves to leave their beds soon enough, to attend the morning

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ning worship. They cry out, yet *a little sleep, a little slumber and folding the hands to sleep*. But let us resolve to shake off this sloth, and not prefer our own ease and pleasure to the worship of God. Nor,

Thro' fear of trouble, and to avoid the trials we may be exposed to, for our firm adherence to Christ and his ways. It was the Psalmist's complaint; *For thy sake I have born reproach, shame hath covered my face, for the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up* (a). My friends are apt to censure and condemn me, *I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to my mothers children* (b). They think me more zealous and forward than I need to be, and instead of commending my devotion, and recommending of it as an example of piety to others, they weaken my hands, and endeavour to discourage me in it. As for my enemies they are sure to reproach me, they hate me, and for my zeal to thy house are ready to eat me up, and would devour me. But it should be our fixed resolution not to forsake the house of our God, notwithstanding all the discouragements we meet with, either from friends or enemies; tho' some should be ready to censure and condemn us tho' others revile and speak contemptibly of us, and our way of worship, and we should be exposed to the scorn of fools, yea, not only laughed at, but persecuted, for our firm adhering to the pure worship of God.

Nor thro' pride and conceit, this carries some off from publick assemblies, viz. A pretence that they know as much already, as others can tell them, and it's but a loss of time to be still hearing the same things over again: they can improve it to as much advantage by reading their Bible, or some good books at home. But this is the high road to apostacy, and its no wonder if such a principle issue

(a) Psal. 69. 7, 9. (b) Ver. 8.

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in an utter renunciation of all religion. The Psalmist longed for God's sanctuary, tho' it was to see the power and glory of God, as he *had seen it* (a). We must not expect a new gospel, another revelation; but we may hope in publick ordinances to have the same made more clear and intelligible, more powerful and effectual; for God loves the gates of *Zion*, more than all the dwellings of *Jacob*; and has promised wherever christians are gathered together in the Redeemer's name, he will in a peculiar manner be present with them to bless them.

Nor thro' covetousness and for worldly advantage. It was from hence that *Demas* forsook *Paul* and went to *Thessalonica* (b); that being the likeliest place to serve the turn of a man who loved the present world; for there was an idol's temple, where some think he became a priest, or this was a noble emporium, where others think he became a merchant. Be that how it will, the love of this world was that which caused him to forsake his religion. But let us be faithful to our engagements, and never forsake the house of our God; either for fear of loss, or from the hopes and prospect of gain: thro' cowardise to avoid trouble, or covetousness to attend our farm and merchandize. If we are of the Psalmist's mind, a day in God's courts will be better to us than a thousand elsewhere, and we shall chuse to be door-keepers in his house, rather than to dwell in the tents of wickedness, and therein be raised to the highest preferments.

Nor thro' prejudice and discontent; personal quarrels and party strifes have driven some from the house of their God. Supposed, or (if real) yet slight offences have given them a disgust, and caused 'em in a pet to forsake their place and duty. But my brethren, this ought not to be. Because one

(a) *Psal.* 63. 2. (b) *1 Tim.* 4. 20.

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has offended me, shall I therefore sin against God? if another has not done his duty, must I therefore neglect mine?

Nor thro' prophaneness and irreligion; so too many have done. Their former zeal for God's house, is now become the matter of their own jest; they laugh at all their past devotion; and wonder they should be so silly as to run after sermons, &c. and being (as they imagine) grown wiser, they have left their seat in the temple, to place themselves in that of the scorner.

Such is the prophaneness of many, that they are grown to an utter contempt of gospel ordinances, and the day set apart for the administration of them. The commands and promises of God are of equal weight with 'em, *i. e.* none at all: for notwithstanding all he has said to enforce the strict observation of his holy-day; the mornings of it are lost with many in their beds, and the afternoon in company and entertainment. Others spend it in the fields, and make that the day for walking abroad or journeying, and visiting; and their hearts are so estranged from the publick worship, that they prefer their lusts, their pleasures and sinful recreations, to all the privileges and advantages of God's house. But all this will be bitterness in the end; and therefore, oh my soul, come not thou into their secret, mine honour, be not thou united to their assembly.

Nor for want of a present sensible advantage. Their not profiting by a long attendance on publick ordinances, has tempted some to think at least, of quitting their place in God's house; from an imagination that there's less guilt contracted by a total absence from holy ordinances, than such an unprofitable attendance on them. But this persuasion comes not of him that calls you; the hand of Satan is in all this, whom you ought stedfastly to resist.

Lastly

Lastly, not thro' the apostacy and defection of others; a thing that too often happens. Some person's goodness, is like a morning cloud and an early dew that soon passes away. We have sad instances of those that once shew'd a great zeal for religion, and were very forward promoters of such lectures and societies, but afterwards broke thro' all the restraints of their former engagements into the utmost height of wickedness and impiety; and have, at last, grown worse than many others that never went their length. And is this to be wondred at! does it surprise us? should it offend us? did not many of our Lord's disciples go back, and walk no more with him? They that ran after him where-ever he went, followed him from place to place with abundance of zeal, now turn their backs upon him, and will no longer attend upon his ministry; and did this defection of others make the disciples think the worse of him or his service? Judge by their answer to that question, *Will ye also go away? Lord, whither should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* They reject the thought with the utmost indignation, and are the more determined for Christ themselves, when they see others sit so loose to him. Thus should we resolve to stand by our engagements to God and one another, whatever others do, tho' they have or should forsake the house of God, yet will not we. Their example shall never influence us so far as to discourage us, much less turn us aside from the way of our duty, but rather excite us to a greater stedfastness in the faith, and zeal in frequenting the house of God, whatever others do, let us resolve we will serve the Lord.

And to assist you herein I shall leave with you the following directions.

Dir. I. Act in all you do, from a principle of love

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love to God and his worship. The love of God's house should be at the bottom of all our endeavours for its prosperity. Its this facilitates duty; makes that hearty, and us constant in its performance. It's this that commends all our services to God. The laying down our lives in martyrdom to confirm the truth, and the giving our estates in charity to feed the poor, would all be nothing without it. And as this makes the duty it self hearty, so will it make us constant in it. The more love, ever the more activity. All the strength of the mind and powers of nature wait upon love; they contrive and cast about for the good of the object beloved.

If there be a sincere affection to the house of God, we shall think no pains or cost too much to bestow upon it. *Lord, saith David, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwells (a).* Therefore I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. I love to be in that dear place, and am pleased when others call upon me to repair to it.

And because of his love to it, this, says he, is the one thing I have desired of the Lord, which also I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my Life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his holy temple (b).

And again, because I have set my affection to the house of my God (c), therefore have I given of my own proper goods, such large summs, towards the building of it. He did not perform this service as papists afterwards built churches, or pharisees gave alms; the former to make atonement for their sins, and as a commutation for pennance; the latter for vain applause, to be seen and admired of men: no, but because he had set his affection

(a) Psal. 26. 8. (b) Psal. 27. 4. (c) 1 Chron. 29. 3.

to it. From all which it appears, how neceſſary this principle is to make us ſteady in our reſolutions, not to forſake the houſe of our God. If there be a ſincere affection to his houſe, if we love the worſhip, ſervice and ordinances of Chriſt; if we love ſabbaths; if we love prayer and the word; if we take a pleaſure in the communion of ſaints, and a delight in the ordinances of divine worſhip, we ſhall never grow weary of God's ſervice, ſo as to forſake his houſe. And the want of this principle is one great cauſe of all our declenſions and backſlidings from God.

This being ſecured we ſhou'd then,

Dir. II. Watch againſt any ſecret diſlike of God's worſhip and ordinances ariſing in our hearts. Total apoſtacies uſually take their riſe from hence: An indifferency and coldneſs towards our ſpiritual Priviledges, grows by degrees to a downright contempt and neglect of them: therefore ſtop this in its beginning; meet with ſuch a diſtemper when it firſt ſeizes you, ſuſpect every thing that ſo much as tends to a forſaking the houſe of your God.

Dir. III. Be concerned to find a real advantage to your own ſouls, by your attendance on divine inſtitutions. The want of this is another thing that lies at the bottom of all our declenſions and apoſtacies: When we reſt in a form of godlineſs, and ſatiſfy our ſelves with meer external performances, being at the ſame time ſtrangers to the life and power of religion; the exerciſes thereof will become burthenſome, and as ſuch are like to be diſcarded at laſt. Without this, the moſt ſolemn engagements are no more able to hold us, than the *Philiftines* cords were to bind *Sampſon*. We ſhall in time grow weary of the ſervice, reckon it a taſk and a burthen, which we ſhall be ſtill ſeeking an opportunity to get rid of, eſpeci-

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ally in an hour of temptation: whereas if in this house, and in these attendances, we taste and see that God is gracious; if we behold his glory and feel his power; if we have an experimental knowledge of communion with him therein, we shall be secured against all temptations to forsake his house.

Dir. IV. See to it, that your hearts be not absent from God's house, when your bodies are present there. The great thing that God looks at, is the heart; and if this be removed from him, we forsake the very places which we daily frequent. *Israel* of old worshipped God, they did not neglect his ordinances; but went at stated times into the temple to pray. *This people*, says God, *draw nigh to me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips*, but then the complaint is, *their hearts are removed far from me* (a). We may run thro' many years of profession, of prayers and sermons, sacraments and sabbaths; and in the worst sense, all this while be said to forsake the house of our God: For in his account (who sees not as man sees) we are, where our hearts are: God, may be near in our mouths, but far from our reins. It concerns us therefore to take a particular care, that our minds be not absent, and our hearts at a distance from God, when to appearance we are drawing nigh to him: for otherwise we really forsake the assemblies, we would be thought to attend.

Dir. V. Exercise your selves in a due consideration of Christ the apostle and high priest of our profession. This is the apostle's own direction, when he is exhorting the believing *Hebrews* to a constancy and perseverance in the profession of their faith, *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest*

(a) Mat. 15. 7, 8.

of our profeſſion, *Chriſt Jeſus* (a): Be much in the contemplation of the perſon, office and work of Chriſt; conſider what he is in himſelf, and what he is to you; think of him as your apoſtle and high prieſt, as your pattern and example, as your head and judge: remember him that did and ſuffered ſo much becauſe of his zeal for God's houſe. Conſider the day of his coming is at hand, when he will graciously reward thoſe that faithfully ſerved him; and as ſeverely puniſh them that deſpiſed his perſon, and neglected his worſhip. This will keep you from fainting and growing weary in your minds, and give you an aſſured victory in the end.

It's the obſervation of one upon this place, whoſe thoughts in theſe things I own go a great way with me, ' That the want of this conſideration of the apoſtle and high prieſt of our profeſſion, is the great reaſon ſo many fall off from the truths and ways of the goſpel. By the neglect of this they loſe the great means of their preſervation. It's no wonder, that the ways and ordinances of Chriſt are neglected, when he himſelf is ſo; ſince they have no beauty nor excellency in them, but what ariſes from their relation to his perſon and offices; and when theſe are not underſtood, they muſt needs become burthenſome and unpleaſant. If we ſearch into the root of ſoul-diltempers, and enquire whence it is, that we find a ſecret diſlike of the ways and ordinances of Chriſt, at leaſt not that delight in 'em as formerly, we ſhall find our hearts and ſpirits have not been exerciſed with that conſideration of the perſon and office of Chriſt, they ought to have been. And therefore I do recommend to you this direction

(a) Heb. 3. 1.

of the apostle, as the most effectual means to keep us stedfast in the profession of our faith.

Lastly, resolve and attempt all in religion, with a dependance upon the spirit's aid for your assistance; the blessing of God for your success, and the blood of Christ for your acceptance.

Our resolutions for God must be serious and advised, thorough and absolute; but then with a deep sense of our own insufficiency, disclaiming all confidence in our own strength, and depending entirely on the aid and assistance of the blessed spirit; for if he forsake us, the most solemn engagements will certainly come to nothing.

The blessing of God is that also which we must depend upon for our success, in all we do of this nature; *For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.* You have in this exercise one to plant, and another to water, but tho' these were a Paul or an Apollos, it's all they could do, this is the furthest they can go; its God must give the increase, and his blessing alone that perfects the work. To conclude,

Let all be done with a dependance upon the Redeemer's righteousness for our acceptance. We shall see cause to acknowledge even when we have done our best, *that we are but unprofitable servants*, and need a better obedience than our own to recommend us to the acceptance of God. Our deceitful hearts will break thro' the strongest engagements, and our impure mixtures, pollute the holiest duties; its therefore the spirit's help that must make us faithful, and the Son's mediation alone that can render us accepted. Without his spirit we can do nothing, and even that which is performed in his strength, must be perfumed with his incense, or it will never come up before God with acceptance.



*The Nature and Advantage of
Trusting in GOD.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at the FUNERAL of the Reverend

Mr. *THO. SIMMONS.*

MARCH 17, 1717-18.

P S A L. LXXI. I.

*In thee, O LORD, do I put my Trust: Let me never
be put to confusion.*



T's a mournful providence that has brought us hither at this time. The remains of that Minister, whose face you were won't to see, and whose voice you have so often heard in this pulpit, are now plac'd before you in his coffin, and must immediately be attended to his grave; which will be done, I doubt not, by many of you, as in *Stephen's* case, with great lamentation over him.

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This

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This providence speaks aloud to you ; and I also am desired to speak to you upon the occasion of it ; wherein I shall endeavour to assist and comfort the souls of the living, rather than embalm the name of the dead.

In order to this, at the direction of the deceased, I am now to discourse to you upon these words of the Psalmist, *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion.* Wherein,

1. He solemnly professes his dependance on God. *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.* He had done so from his youth up, *Thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth,* v. 5. And this he continued to do even to old age ; for then it was he made this profession in the text, as appears by what he says, v. 9. *Cast me not off in the time of old age : forsake me not when my strength faileth me.* Some trust in chariots, and some in horses ; some trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches ; some glory in their strength, their wisdom, &c. but whatever others do, O Lord, I put my trust in thee ; in which he openly avows to the world, and humbly professes to God, the entire confidence he has in him ; that all his dependance is upon him, and all his expectations from him.

In confidence of this,

2. He humbly pleads for mercy. *Let me not be put to confusion.* Not that he thought God a debtor to him for his Faith, how much glory soever it gave unto him : He is sensible, that the firmest dependance on his name, cou'd not deserve the least mercy at his hand. The creature by this lays him under no obligation ; for can a man be profitable unto God, as he that's wife may be to himself or his fellow-creature ? But relying on the goodness of God, and the truth of his word, having profess'd his faith in him, he is humbly bold to

plead with him, that he wou'd not shame the hope of a confiding soul : that others might have no cause to reproach and insult him upon this account, as if his trust was either misplaced or not sincere. And no doubt but he offered up this prayer with an humble hope of being heard ; and did believe one that was helped to put his trust in God, shou'd himself never be put to confusion.

In speaking to these words, I shall,

- I. Explain the nature of this trust.
- II. Shew what those that exercise it, are solicitous to escape.
- III. The reason they have both to desire and expect it.

I shall

I. Explain the nature of this grace, and shew what that trust is, which we may hope will not put us to confusion.

I am sensible this is a thing much better known by our own experience, than all the explications of others : that we shall have not only a more comfortable, but a clearer, and more distinct apprehension of it, by being our selves enabled to exercise it, than by the justest and most exact description given of it by the words of any man whatsoever. However, I shall offer something towards the satisfying this enquiry.

And in the general it may be observed, That trust in God, is a piece of natural religion ; a great part of divine worship, indeed, that which takes into its compass the whole of our duty to God. In the general it may be described as an act of the mind, wherein we depend upon God to remove the evils we feel, or prevent those we fear,

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and to bestow upon us all the good things we need, with a believing expectation of a comfortable issue in his own time.

To say we trust in God, is in effect humbly to tell him, when we are afraid and in danger, we run to him for safety.

When we are oppress'd, and born down by heavy burdens, we lean upon him for support. And,

When we are in wants and straits, we look to him for supplies. Having said thus much of it in general, I shall give a more particular account of it in the following propositions.

Prop. 1. God alone is the object of our trust. He is so in opposition to all creatures whatsoever. There's nothing more due to God than this, and it's a glory he will never allow should be given to another. He has in particular commanded us to cease from *Man*, from trusting in him: we must not depend upon his wisdom, strength, kindness, promises and faithfulness, &c. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord, Jerem. xvii. 5.* It's an affront to God; for he puts that confidence in, and thereby gives that glory to a creature, which is due only to himself. And what's such an affront to God, is the greatest folly in us; for the arm we stay on is flesh, and therefore not sufficient to support us: wherein is he to be accounted of, whose breath is in his nostrils? whose arm is but flesh? whose promises are so uncertain, being himself either weak that he cannot, or false that he will not perform them? *Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie, Psal. lxii. 9.* He that trusts in man, leans upon a broken reed, and his confidence in the end will be his confusion; cease therefore from man, make him

him neither your fear, nor your hope; let God alone be your trust and stay.

In like manner we are forbid trusting in *riches*: which how foolish soever it is, and unlikely soever it may be thought, is a thing we are in danger of: Else the apostle would not have directed *Timothy* in so solemn a manner to charge the rich in this world that they *do not trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God*, 1 Tim. vi. 17. It's a description of the wicked man in general, tho' more particularly spoken of *Doeg*, *That he makes not God his strength, but trusts in the abundance of his riches*, Psal. 2. 7. His gold is his hope and so becomes his God. But this his way is at once his sin and his folly. For these while they promise rest, multiply our cares; and when we are pleasing our selves with thoughts of their long continuance, often make themselves wings and fly away: or tho' they should continue with us to the last, can't profit us in the day of evil. Nor is there any thing in our selves that should be our trust. Our natural strength, acquired excellencies, moral endowments, religious performances, we are forbid glorifying in, and accordingly it's the christian's character, that *he rejoices in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh*.

But tho' this trust be essential to a creature, and thus due to the divine being, it can never be exercised by an apostate creature on an absolute God; as is plain from the case of the devils, who believe, but then only tremble at the thoughts of the God they own, without being able to trust in him. James i. 19. *The devils believe and tremble*. We are therefore said to believe in God by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 21. *who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, &c.* In him the divine perfections are presented amiable and delightful to our view: In him we see God not only just, but merciful

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merciful, punishing sin to preserve the authority of his law ; but ready to pardon it to declare the riches of his grace. God finds rest for his offended justice in his Son ; and we find rest for our guilty souls in God.

And not only so, but our Saviour propounds himself to us as the object of our trust, together with the Father, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*, John xiv. 1. Where he requires faith in himself, in the same manner it is required in God. And we find the same blessedness pronounced on those that trust in the Son, which is any where predicated of them that trust in God. It's said (speaking of God) *Blessed are all they that trust in him*, Psal. xxxiv. 8. and, *if his anger* (speaking of the Son) *be kindled but a little, blessed are all they that trust in him*, Psal. 2. 12. It being the will of the Father that all men should thus do honour to the Son, together with himself; wherein he does not give his glory to another, because he and the Father are one.

Prop. 2. This trust is to be exercised in God at all times and seasons. It's a grace calculated for every condition, tho' more especially fitted to some circumstances of life. Therefore thus the command runs, Psal. lxii. 8. *Trust in him at all times, ye people*, &c. in prosperity and adversity, when you are full, and when you are empty: Tho' *he slay you, yet trust in him*; so holy *Job* resolved to do, *Job* xiii. 15. *Abraham* believed in hope against hope; trust God, when you can't trace him; when he hides himself; removes your comforts; empties you of all creature enjoyments; and seems to shut out your prayers; when he calls you forth to difficult duties, and to bear the forest tryals; trust him in life and death; at all times, in all cases, and upon all occasions. It's never out of season.

Prop. 3. This trust is to be reposed in God for every thing we need, and with all that we have.

We

We must depend upon him for wisdom and counsel, when we are in doubt, and know not what to do; for strength and support under heavy loads of affliction; for protection in danger, and deliverance from evil. In a word, it's our duty to trust God for time and eternity, earth and heaven, for the salvation of our souls, the resurrection of our bodies and the compleat happiness of both in heaven.

And in like manner we are to trust God with every thing that regards his interest and kingdom, his church and people, his gospel and all the concerns of his glory in the world. As also with every thing that relates to our selves, our persons, families, name, credit, reputation, liberty and life it self; all these are to be left with him, and committed intirely to his care.

Prop. 4. God is to be trusted in the way of his commands and our duty. This faith must have all the necessary attendants and fruits of it. It should be far from us to think that all required of us herein is, a bold perswasion and strong confidence of God's care, when we our selves are regardless of his commands, and live as we list; we are required therefore to *trust in God, and do good*, Psal. xxxvii. 3. and to *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing*, 1 Pet. iv. 19. So that this trust in God must be accompanied with obedience to all his commands, and a conscientious use of all proper and necessary means for our own security and preservation. Such a conformity to God's will must always attend our dependance on his care, else we tempt God rather than trust him.

Prop. 5. This trust in God is to be exercised in a dependance upon the necessary aids and assistances of the divine spirit. Our Saviour tells us, *without him we can do nothing*; and much less this thing, wherein so much of the life of religion does consist; and which, tho' easily said, is one of the hardest things

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things in the world regularly to perform; and therefore when we are said *by him to believe in God*, 1 Pet. i. 21. it may be as well understood, that it is by his spirit's operation, as his own mediation and intercession. By this spirit we have thro' him access to the Father this way as well as in prayer; and no man can *call Christ Lord*, so as to trust in him for salvation, *but by the Holy Ghost*. The trust that's warranted by the word, must be rais'd by his influence. Such is and must be the trust we may humbly hope will not expose us to that which every good man dreads to fall under. And what that is I come to shew,

II. What they that exercise this trust in God, are solicitous to escape, and therefore earnestly pray against. Now this is their being put to confusion, or being ashamed; and this either of their faith, or their hope. Their earnest request and prayer is, that they may be never ashamed.

First, Of their faith in, and dependance on, God. That their confidence may not in the end be their confusion. This is what they know not how to bear. They are as a wonder to many, for their trials and their faith; every one waits to see what will be the issue of that extraordinary confidence they profess to have in God; and how can they bear the thoughts of being exposed for their faith to the scorn of others, and taunted at as foolish creatures for their trust in God? that others should laugh them to scorn, and shake their head at 'em, saying, *They trusted on the Lord*, Psal. xxii. 7, 8. Oh, let us never be ashamed of what we did herein, as if it was a bold and presumptuous thing for which we had no warrant; or a vain and foolish thing from which we could not reasonably expect any advantage, and therefore in the end would be matter of shame.

Secondly,

Secondly, Of their hope and expectation raised upon this trust. Let me never be ashamed of my dependance on God, nor of my hope from him. Let me not be disappointed of the mercy I expected, and so made ashamed of my hope, either of deliverance in this world, or of salvation in the next.

Of deliverance in this world. God is their trust, and they expect and hope for great things from him. They do not indeed hope for great things for themselves in this world; they are forbid, and especially at some times to seek them; they do not expect great things from men, nor do they look for an entire exemption from all afflictive penal evils in this life. They are not so vain as to please themselves with the thought of an absolute freedom from temptations of any kind, whilst they are in this uncertain world; this wou'd be as foolish a thing as for a man that puts to sea for a long voyage, to imagine he shall meet with no storms, when his business is to provide himself with all things necessary to weather them. They know that thro' manifold tribulations they must enter into the kingdom of heaven. They have therefore no such hopes as these, if they had, they wou'd indeed be ashamed.

But they do hope for all necessary supplies and comfort under their trials; that God will be a very present help to them in the time of trouble; if he cause them to pass thro' fire and water, that he will be with them there; that till he remove the temptation, he will give them strength to bear it, and in his own time a happy escape out of it. That those waters which come into their soul, and threaten to overwhelm them, in due time shall be asswaged. If providences are dark and cloudy, they hope to see fair weather coming from the promises; and tho' they walk in trouble, that God will
revive

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revive them: That he will give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness; these things they do hope for, and humbly pray that they may not be disappointed of their hopes; that they may not miss the blessing they expected from God, and depended upon receiving, as promised to those that trust in him. But especially,

They desire they may not be ashamed of their hope of salvation in the other world: *But have confidence before the Lord at his coming.* 1 John ii. 28. q. d. "When I come into the other world, and shall stand at his tribunal, who judges without respect of persons, where I am to receive the final and decisive sentence, let me not then be put to confusion. Let me not at that time when I come big with hopes of finding the judge my friend, of being acquitted at his bar, and receiv'd into his kingdom, let me not then be ashamed of my hope, and instead of hearing those ravishing words, *come thou blessed of my father, &c.* be confounded by that dreadful doom, *depart from me ye cursed, &c.* and when I pleas'd myself with the hopes of the judge's favour, be told he never knew me. Oh, let me not thus be put to confusion. What, Lord, wou'd more effectually fill me with shame, than to meet with a curse where I hoped for a blessing? and be forbid the blissful presence into which I thought to be admitted? and instead of those Joys I reckon'd so much upon, be doomed to the torments I never suspected? Lord, I trusted in thee, I hope I did so, and that truly tho' imperfectly, let me not then be put to confusion; shame not my trust either here or hereafter; let my innocency be vindicated and clear'd up in the day when all things will be made manifest, from those mists and clouds that here obscured it; let it then appear,

of trusting in G O D. I I I

'pear, tho' I was not perfect, I was upright, and
'kept my self from the great transgression, *Psal.*
'xix. 13. Then let my reproaches be roll'd away,
'and my righteousness be brought forth as the
'light'. I come now to

III. The reason and encouragement which they
that trust in God have both to desire and expect
this. And here I shall shew

1. The reason they have to desire it. Now this
is obvious to every one, and needs not to be long
insisted on. No man cares to be put to confusion.
For

1st. This is a thing most ungrateful and dis-
pleasing to humane nature; what we can't bear,
with any tolerable patience, but are always uneasy
under. Shame is the reproach of nature, and ve-
ry grievous to it; hardly any thing is more ab-
horrent and displeasing to us; no wonder then the
Psalmist does so earnestly pray to be delivered
from this evil. But in the present case, shame
and confusion especially is dreaded, because.

2^{dly}. It wou'd here be ruinous and destructive.
It involves in it a certain and an eternal ruin.
To be disappointed here is to be undone; it infers
the loss of all that's valuable and dear: Had these
no hope beyond this life, they wou'd of all others
be most miserable; and shou'd the hope they have
beyond it deceive them, they must (if possible)
still be more miserable, since as nothing more ex-
poses us to shame than the disappointment of our
hopes, so of all others the hopes of salvation. *The*
troops of Tema were asham'd, because they hoped, Job
vi. 19. Where they expected floods of water, they
met with heaps of sand; and this made them
asham'd. What confusion then must he be fill'd with,
who looked for glory and honour, immortality
and eternal life, but meets with indignation and
wrath, tribulation and anguish? that misses a hap-
piness

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piness he fully expected, and finds the torments he never dreamt of? No wonder then to hear the Psalmist offering up such a request as this to God; Oh, let me not be asham'd, and put to confusion. He deprecates this with the highest reason; if he be asham'd he is disappointed, and to be disappointed in this case is to be undone.

Having shewed the reason they have to desire this; I come now,

2. To shew what encouragement they have to expect it. What ground have they to hope it shall not be their case? that they shall not be put to confusion, but be heard in the thing they fear and pray against? I answer, they have reason to expect this,

First, From the excellency of the object. This trust, we are sure, is not misplac'd, but fix'd on one that's well able to support it. Divine perfections are sufficient pillars to bear up the believer's soul; and he that leans upon these can never sink. What may not be hoped for from a God! a being of unsearchable wisdom, almighty power, invariable truth, and of boundless mercy and goodness? When we rely upon the conduct of omniscience, we have more for our direction than the wisdom, not only of all the men on earth, but of all the angels in heaven: we run no hazard in trusting him in whom *there is everlasting strength*, Isa. xxvi. 4. We may safely depend upon that mercy which is above the heavens, and endures for ever. It's impossible to be deceiv'd, when we hope in the promise of one that cannot lie. The prophet puts it upon this, or rather our Saviour himself, for a greater than *Isaiah* is here, when he says, *the Lord God will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded, and I know that I shall not be asham'd*, Isai. 1. 7. The apostle also puts it upon this in his own case, *nevertheless I am not asham'd*,

ed, for I know whom I have believed: What manner of person he is, one every way fitted for his great undertaking; one that's mighty to save; who is well able to keep that which I have committed to him; I shall never be ashamed of my trust in him, or of my expectations from him. We are often ashamed of our trust in other things, of our hope, and expectations from creatures. These are cisterns that can't supply us, they are reeds that can't support us; so far from that, when we lean upon them they run into our hands, and wound us; we find them weak and feeble, unprofitable and vexatious: things, that can't profit us, don't answer our expectations, and we are ashamed of our hope; but trust in God can never be attended with such consequences, from the nature and excellency of the object. They that trust in God for help shall not be disappointed, they know whom they have trusted, and therefore know they shall not be ashamed.

Secondly, From the purpose of God. Eternal love designs all that for a good man which the promise gives him reason to expect; and this is a full security to our faith. We may safely hope to receive what God from everlasting has designed to give. He says my counsel shall stand, and the believer therefore says, my faith shall not fail: he never changes his purpose, and for that reason I shall never be ashamed of my hope; he will never be disappointed of his design, nor I deceived in my expectation. The immutability of his purposing love gives an effectual security to a confiding soul.

Thirdly, from the promises of the word. These are many and great, and run in such terms as these; *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, ye shall never be ashamed, nor confounded world without end, Isai. xlv. 7. Fear not for ye shall*

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not be ashamed, nor be confounded, for ye shall not be put to shame, *Iſai. liv. 4.* And again, *whoſoever believeth on him ſhall not be aſhamed, Rom. x. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 6.* Theſe are the promiſes which God has given us, and faithful is he that hath promiſed; and iſſo, then they are ſafe that have believed. Divine verity ever has been, and ever will be good ſecurity. God will never break his own word, nor balk his peoples hopes. His truth muſt fail, if their hopes are deceived; but this can never be. I ſay it cannot be; we have a ſure hope of eternal life, becauſe *God that cannot lie has promiſed it, Tit. i. 2. Its impoſſible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 18.* It is not impoſſible for men, even the beſt, the honeſteſt men in the world, to lie. Its' indeed improbable they ſhould, we hope and believe they will not deceive us: But it is not impoſſible, a thing they cannot do; but ſo it is in the preſent caſe, it's impoſſible for God to lie: this is a thing he cannot do: he that cannot lie has promiſ'd this before the world began; and it's at once his glory and our ſafety that he cannot do it. The Pſalmiſt therefore pleads with God, and all that truſt in him may do it in the ſame manner; *remember the word unto thy ſervant, upon which thou haſt cauſed me to hope, Pſal. cxix. 49.* Haſt thou not ſaid he that believes ſhall never be confounded? Is it not thine own word, that thou would'ſt aſſuredly do me good? Lord I have hoped in this word: Thou didſt cauſe and enable me ſo to do; and wilt thou at once break a promiſe of thine own making, and daſh a hope of thine own raiſing? No! We may be aſſured this he will never do, for faithful is he that has promiſed. He can do all he will do, and he will do all that he has promiſed to do.

Fourthly, from the glorious undertaking of our Redeemer. All that he has done, and is doing, gives

gives us the fullest assurance that our trust in God shall never make us ashamed.

By the obedience of his Life, and the sufferings of his death, he has purchased eternal redemption for all those that obey him; and we are therefore said *thro' the spirit, to wait for the hope of righteousness by faith*, Gal. v. 5. *i. e.* for heaven purchas'd by this righteousness, and therefore our hope will not make us ashamed; for what Christ has purchased at this dear rate, shall never be with-held from those that trust in him.

His resurrection also gives us the same assurance. *As he was delivered for our offences, he was rais'd again for our justification*, Rom. ii. ult. *God raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God*, 1 Pet. i. 21. That we might believe and hope, that he who had raised up and glorify'd Christ the head, would also at last glorify his members; and a trust built upon this foundation, we may be assured shall never make us ashamed.

His intercession in heaven does in like manner confirm our hope. This is said to be an *anchor sure and stedfast that will never fail us, and to enter into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us enter'd*, Heb. vi. 19, 20. This lays hold on God himself, and Christ as the high-priest of the church who entred there as our forerunner to secure our coming to him; where he prays that our faith may not fail, and that our hope of heaven may not be disappointed, but that where he is there all his may be also to behold his glory, and we are sure the Father always hears him.

Fifthly, the nature of the act, it being that which is

Warranted by the word,
Justifiable in the creature, and
Honourable to God.

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First, It's well warranted by the word. It comes under the most exprefs command; it's required of us under the severest penalties, and is encouraged by the most gracious promises. God has obliged us to exercise this trust in him, commanded us to do it, made it our indispensable duty, given us all possible assurance of its success: and has himself wrought it, in the souls of his people; caused them to hope as well as commanded them to do it; and after all this, can we imagine, that he will deceive a confiding soul, shame the hope of one that trusts him upon the warrant of his word; in obedience to his command, and under the encouragement of his promise?

Secondly, It is a thing so justifiable in the creature. There are a thousand things we do, of which we may well be ashamed: we either are so, or have reason to be so. Things that cannot be justified; that wont bear telling by others, or thinking of our selves, make us ashamed. Such are things,

Weak and foolish, trifling and childish; wherein we act below our selves; perform a mean part, which exposes us to the contempt and reproach of others.

Things, rash and unadvised, done in haste and without due, or indeed any consideration; these we repent of at leisure, and can't reflect on without blushing. Especially things,

Really sinful and evil, directly against the law of God, the light of nature, and the rules of sound reason; these are things whereof we either are or shall be ashamed: whatever pleasure and satisfaction we had in committing them, there's nothing but pain and shame in the review. *What fruit had you in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* Rom. vi. 17.

But there can be none of these things said of our trust in God. It

It is not a weak foolish thing. Others indeed may laugh at a good man for a fool, and banter his faith as folly; but he is too sensible of the wisdom of the proceeding to be concerned at others rallying him upon it: He is well assured that herein he does not act a foolish part; he is not left to do a weak thing; but that this really is and at last will be found to be, the wisest thing he ever did. He never did better for himself, nor more consulted his own advantage, than when he did this. And will not, should not men praise thee, instead of laughing at thee, when thou dost well for thy self?

Nor does this come into the number of things rash and unadvised. Things done in haste we many times repent of at leisure, and wish them undone: But this is quite of another nature. In this we may be fearless and confident, as the apostle was, in that noble declaration of his, *nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him*, 2 Tim. i. 12. "I am no more ashamed of what I have done, than I am afraid of what I shall suffer; in this will I be confident, I will abide by it, and stand to it in the face of the world. I know what I did when I believed; it was not a rash and unadvised thing, but done upon good grounds, and mature deliberation. I am so far from seeing any cause to repent of it, that it's what I wou'd do again, were it yet to do; nay it's what I desire to be always doing: Had I ten thousand souls I wou'd venture them all this way; I wou'd commit them to his care and keeping, and am well assured, I shou'd never be ashamed of what I had done.

Much less can there be any danger of shame upon the account of its being an evil thing.

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There can be no manner of pretence for this. It's a debt we all owe, and an homage we are bound to pay to our great creator and redeemer by the law of nature. It's what God has expressly commanded in his word, and that under the severest penalties.

Blessedness is pronounced upon those that do it, and always annexed to this trust; and we shall therefore be so far from being ashamed of doing it, that we can never justify our selves in the neglect of it. To all which we add, that this is

Thirdly, Honourable to God. He does not only require this, but assures us he is highly pleas'd with it, that he reckons himself glorified by it: *Abraham being strong in faith, gave glory to God*, Rom. iv. 19 20. And shall that which is so pleasing to God, in the end cause shame to his people? will he reproach an act, that gives him so much glory? we may be sure he will not.

Briefly, shou'd they be put to confusion that trust in God, then the promises he has made to his Son, and to his servants must be vain. The Father must be false to his word, and unjust to his Son. The Redeemer's blood wou'd be shed in vain, and himself either impotent or unfaithful or both. The confiding soul wou'd become the jest of infidels, and the triumph of devils. The scriptures must be idle tales, and our whole bible one continued fable: faith but a fancy, and hope no better than a dream. But thank God, none of these shall ever be, and therefore, he that puts his trust in the Lord, we are sure shall never be put to confusion.

Having gone thro' these general heads, I shall improve them under the following reflections.

Use. I. If good men shall not be ashamed of their faith, and hope, they will be ashamed of their fears and unbelief; of all their groundless jealousies and misprisions, their distrust of God's care, power
and

and faithfulness; of their hasty conclusions, that one day they shall perish by the hands of their enemies: That the Lord hath forsaken them, and their God has forgotten them: that their way is hid from the Lord, and their judgment pass'd over from their God. Upon reflection, they will be ashamed of such questions as these, Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious? does his promise fail for evermore? is his mercy clean gone? will he be favourable no more? has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? they will be ashamed of these things another day. God will bring them to acknowledge, as the Psalmist did, *this is my infirmity*, my sin, a very great fault, I now see it, I own it, I am ashamed of it. It confounds me to think I should be so unbelieving, that I should in this manner distrust the power and faithfulness, question the care and kindness of that God who never failed a believing soul.

Use. II. he that's truly religious has really, indeed unspeakably the advantage of all other men. He does that of which he shall never be ashamed; blessed therefore is the man, that trusteth in the Lord; blessed above all other men, he has every way the advantage of 'em, both in life and death.

In life he has vastly the advantage of them. He may and often does fall short of 'em in other respects; He may not have the gifts and accomplishments of some other men, their learning, their honours, their riches, &c. but in this he far exceeds them all: by trusting in God, he has that to quiet his mind, and render him easy, which these things can't furnish out to those that enjoy them in the greatest abundance; and by this means he has that inward peace and comfort without them, which many others never enjoy with 'em. In every state and condition of life he has that to trust to which will never fail him. If he cannot stand by himself, he may lean upon the Lord.

If his burdens are too heavy for him to bear, he knows how to dispose of them, being not only allowed, but commanded to cast them upon that God, who has promised, and is able to sustain him. In the greatest dangers he can always make a safe retreat. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, for his heart is fixed, trusting in God; or if fears are getting up and ready to prevail in him, he suppresses 'em this way. At what time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee. When I see a storm coming, I'll put in to thee for shelter: and in all this, he is not afraid of himself; conscience will never reproach him for his trust in God so long as he lives; tho' others may laugh at him for his faith, and he may fall under the lash of their tongue, he is secure from the lashes of his own conscience, and so long as this is quiet, the other need give him no disturbance. Other men will be ashamed of their trust and confidence, of their hopes and expectations. They that trust in themselves, in the abundance of their wealth, in men, and make flesh their arm, these *shall be ashamed and confounded, all of 'em shall go to confusion together*; but this shall never be the lot of the righteous, for *Israel shall be saved of the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; they shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end*, Isaiah xlv. 16, 17. which leads us also to observe how much he has the advantage of other men,

In death. *Balaam* was sensible of this, or he had never uttered that vain wish, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and my last end be like his*, Numbers xxiii. 10. Oh! let me die the death, not of the rich, the great, the noble and honourable, the wise and the learned, the sensualist and voluptuous; no! but of the righteous; tho' I would live and spend my days with the former, let me die like these; let me end my life with them that have hope in their death, and whose hope will never
make

make them ashamed. Who would not die like these?

This is the man the scripture pronounces blessed. Whatever befalls him, he is sure not to be ashamed; he may be afflicted various ways; he may be reproached and scorned by others, laughed at and despised for his religion; he may be slandered and reviled, evil spoken of, condemned and persecuted by the world; he may be tempted by Satan, deserted for a time, and in part by his God; he may be in great darkness, under many doubts and fears concerning the truth of his faith, and the certainty of his salvation; but he shall never be ashamed either of his faith or hope; so far is he at last from being ashamed because he misses the happiness he expected, that he shall be surprized to find it so much greater than ever he imagined. His hope then is not only answered, but exceeded; so that he shall be obliged to acknowledge the one half was not told him. God does exceeding, abundantly above all that ever entered into his heart to conceive. His services are requited in a way so strange and unexpected, that it's like a master's attending on his servants, which is very surprizing, because an unusual thing. *Verily I say unto you, speaking of those servants that were found watching, the Lord will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them, Luke xii. 37.* The true meaning of which astonishing expression will never be fully understood but in the place where the promise it self is made good. The flight is so high, that it soars above our sight. Had not Christ himself spoke them, the words had been like those St. Paul heard in the third heaven, unspeakable, not lawful for one man to utter, nor possible for another to understand; which fully shews the blessedness above others, of those that trust in God, since their hope is so far from making them ashamed
by

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by meeting with a disappointment, that it will hereafter be every way exceeded and out-done.

Use III. It's a severe reproof to us that we are so little in the exercise of what is so much our duty, and would be so much to our advantage. What strangers are we to the life of faith! Don't we tempt others to think this is all but talk, a bold rant, vain and romantick, speaking big when at the bottom there's nothing in it? Are there not many things, which betray the weakness of our faith? and shew we know but little of the matter? May not Christ say to many of us, as he did to his Disciples, where's your faith? How is it that you have no faith? why are you so unbelieving? how is it that you are so uneasy in your spirits, and uneven in your walk? how comes it to pass your inward peace ebbs and flows as your outward comforts do. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, that cannot be removed.* How is it then, that you are no more established? that you are so fearful, and in such doubt, when you have such a full assurance, that they who put their trust in the Lord shall never be put to confusion? Therefore,

Use. IV. Let us endeavour to understand the nature of, and then to exercise this trust in God. Learn better the life of faith. It's the way the just live; and is indeed the best, the noblest, the most excellent way of Living; most honourable to God and most comfortable to our selves: this will keep us in a state of peace here, and bring us to a state of glory and happiness hereafter, for according to this prayer, having put our trust in the Lord, we may be assured, that we shall never be put to confusion.

This was the humble hope and confidence of our worthy brother, whose death we now lament. He was helped to apply these words to himself, and found comfort in them, both in life and death; he could

could humbly appeal to God concerning the sincerity of his trust, and hoped to find the advantage of it; that it would not make him ashamed. Of this our deceased brother, I know you expect I should say some thing. Without this I believe many would be greatly disappointed, and I don't know but by it, some may be offended; either because I say too much or not enough.

I say to you, as the sons of the Prophet said to *Elisba* concerning the translation of *Elijah*, do you not know that the Lord has taken away your head to day? You do know this: we all know it, but do we consider it? That we lament this day, the loss

Of a Minister. Not of a private christian only: tho' when even such are taken away, when the godly man ceaseth we may well cry out as the Psalmist does, *Help Lord!* Psal. xii. 1. But we bewail the loss of a Minister; one whose work and office was to teach and instruct the ignorant, to warn men of their danger, reprove them for their faults, exhort them to their duty, comfort them under their afflictions and distresses; to shew unto them the way of salvation: here's a light put out, a vessel broken, into which God had put the treasure of the gospel, a Shepherd smitten that was wont to go in and out before the Sheep, and under whose Ministry they found Pasture. It's the loss of a Minister you lament; God has taken away your Shepherd from you this day: He no longer is to be your Teacher and Instructor, you shall never see his face, nor hear his voice more, and should not sorrow fill your heart for the loss of a Minister? especially when it's the loss

Of an able, useful, skilful Minister; not one of mean and common attainments, but eminently qualified and fitted for his work; one that was indeed a work-man, who needed not to be ashamed, that
knew

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knew how to divide the word aright, and give to every man his portion ; one that had a great compass of learning ; having had the advantage of a liberal education both at home and abroad, besides the happiness of a good genius ; one that had considerable gifts and attainments, and an extensive capacity for the service of Christ and his church. Such a minister we have lost. And to make it the greater,

It's the loss not of an aged minister, of one that had reached the common stage of life, and was worn out with labour and age, that had out-liv'd his strength and capacity for publick service ; the death of such a one might in a course of nature have been expected, and wou'd not have been so afflicting. But this is not the case here ; we don't lament the death of a young minister, nor do we that of an old one, whose sun was in its decline, and ready to set ; we are deprived of one in the midst of his years, the prime and vigour of his age, having reached little more than forty ; and therefore one that according to the common course of nature, might have lived many years for the comfort of his family, and the benefit of the church, this makes the stroke so much the heavier.

And as you have lost a minister, so

His family has lost its head. Don't they know this ? are they insensible of it ? can they be unaffected with it ? is it not a blow that cuts deep, and wounds in the most sensible part ? They have lost in him, a husband, a father, a brother ; and must they not be deeply affected with it ? will they not lament for him, and drop a tear over him, crying, ah, my husband, my father, and my brother ! can such a one die unlamented, and especially by them ?

Upon

Upon these accounts we are to sorrow; but do we sorrow as those that have no hope? God forbid!

He trusted in God, and made the Lord his confidence, therefore cou'd pray and hope he should not be ashamed; and it proved according to his wish and expectation, for he finished his course with joy and peace; left the stage without regret and uneasiness, having done his part thereon; he looked the king of terrors in the face without fear and amazement, took death by its cold hand with a calm mind, and welcom'd the message it brought: tho' he had as much reason as many others to desire life, considering his age, circumstances, family, &c. yet to depart and be with Christ, for him was much better.

Having received the sentence of death within himself, how he submitted to it, and with what serenity of mind he compos'd himself to die, let his solemn farewell to his family and friends, the good counsel he gave them, and the blessing with which he blest'd them in the name of the Lord, testify; and may this never be forgotten; may it always be remembred and practised by those that heard it.

Whatever you saw in him that was virtuous and praise-worthy, transcribe in your hearts and lives; and if any thing was otherwise (for who have not their *Navi*? ministers tho' called angels, no more live like them without faults than food) let that be buried in his grave.

To conclude. By this providence God speaks aloud to us all; to his family, to this church, to his brethren: and may this sad event be sanctified to us all, and those more especially concerned therein be supported under it. It's only the grace of that God whose hand has done this, that can turn such an affliction to our spiritual benefit.

nefit, and make the death of our friends, and especially our minifters, the life of our fouls. To him therefore let us look that this chaftning which is not in it felf joyous but grievous, may afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteoufnefs to thofe that are exercifed thereby. Which God of his infinite mercy grant for the fake of Chrift Jefus our Lord, Amen.





A FUNERAL
S E R M O N
ON THE
D E A T H

Of the REVEREND

Mr. THOMAS MITCHELL;

PREACH'D at

S T E P N E Y.

J A N. 15, 1721.

A C T S xiii. 36.

Δαβὶδ μὲν ᾧ ἰδίᾳ γενεᾷ ὑπηρετήσας τῇ ᾧ θεῷ
ἐβλήθη ἐκοιμήσθαι,

*For David after he had served his own generation,
by the will of God, fell on sleep.—*



T's the observation of a good writer, that we seldom find an eminent saint pass'd over in scripture, with a plain and naked inscription of his uprightness; but some circumstance or other is added, which, like a costly work, or some curious engraving about a tomb, tells the passengers, no ordinary person lies there.

Such

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Such a pillar of remembrance, is erected over *David's* head, to transmit his memorial to future generations, with this honourable inscription, *here lyes the man after God's own heart*, who fulfilled all his wills (a). To which we may add the words of the text, wherein it is recorded to his everlasting honour, after he fell on sleep, that while he lived, *he served his generation, by the will of God*.

I wou'd not insinuate by this, that the apostle's design, was here, to give *David's* character, being sensible the words are introduced for quite another purpose; and mentioned here as a proof, that the great promise made to *David* by name, *That God would not suffer his holy one to see corruption*, could not be understood of him, nor was performed to him in his own person; but must have a far greater prospect, and be fulfilled in him, who was the root as well as the offspring of *David*, his son and his Lord; who tho' *he was put to death in the flesh, was quickned by the spirit, and as he knew no sin, saw no corruption*; whereas *David* after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell on sleep; was gathered to his fathers and did see corruption.

But if we take the words as they lye, and consider 'em in themselves, abstracted from the particular design of the apostle, which I now propose to do, they will appear to be a very proper subject, for a discourse intended, as this is, to pay our last publick respects to the memory of that excellent man, who for some years, served his generation, as a minister of Christ, in this place, but is now fallen asleep and sees corruption.

Two things the words give us an account of concerning *David*.

(a) Πάντα τὰ θελήματά μου. Ver. 22.

1. His holy and useful life. And
2. His blessed and comfortable death.

First, his holy and useful life: *He served his generation by the will of God*; or, as the words may be rendered, *in his own age*, (the time of life that he sojourned here on earth) he *ministred unto*, or *served the counsel of God*. Both readings come much to the same, and tell us, that *David* was not only a good man, but a very useful man; a publick blessing to the world, and to the church of God: one that did a great deal of good in his day, that discharged the duty of his place and station, as much to the benefit of mankind, as to his own honour; accounting it more his glory to be the servant of God, than a ruler over men: and, as such, he did not only now and then perform a single individual good action, but his whole life was made up of the acts of duty and obedience to his God, who graciously overlooked an instance or two to the contrary, and, as hath been observed, pronounced him, *a man after his own heart*; and when he promoted him to the royal dignity, foretold his conduct would be as divine as his character; for he *should fulfil all his wills*. And after such a life, no wonder we hear;

Secondly, Of his happy and comfortable death: One might reasonably expect, that a life so holy, so exemplary, and so eminently useful would end in a death as peaceable and happy; for, *mark the perfect man and behold the upright, the end of that man is peace*: so it proved with *David* himself; for when he had honourably acquitted himself in the dispatch of that business wherein his Lord employed him, and had finished the work given him to do, he lay down to sleep, and went to rest, at night, with a blessed composure of mind. They indeed that do serve the will of God in their own generation, and do it with the greatest

faithfulness, are not exempted from the stroke of death any more than others: but their decease hardly deserves that terrible name; but may rather be called a sleep, an easy and quiet rest. Death to them is like a sleep, and it's but a sleep; while they lived, they walked in their uprightness; when they die, they rest in their beds, and enter into peace. They sleep and their comfort is, they sleep in Jesus; they rest from their labours, and shall awake again in the morning; they take leave of their friends, for the present, and bid them good night; but it is with the hopes of seeing ^{em} again with joy in the morning of the resurrection, when God shall bring with him all that sleep in Jesus.

Having taken a view of the words, as they relate to *David*, I would now observe from them, for our own instruction and comfort, these two things,

- I. That the great end and business of life is to serve our generation, according to the will of God. And
- II. That when we have so done, we must expect, and should be willing to fall asleep, and be gathered to our fathers.

I shall offer something to your thoughts, under each of these heads; and then endeavour to make a proper improvement of them, in one general application.

I. The great end and business of life is to serve our own generation according to the will of God. What *David* actually did, we are all obliged to do, in our respective day and place. None of us, says the apostle, lives to himself; but if we live, we live to the Lord. His servants we are, and him we are obliged to serve. Servants are not allowed to be, sloathful and idle; but required with
all

all diligence and faithfulness to be employed in their master's business. With reference to which, I would observe,

1. That he appoints them their work.
2. That he allows them a convenient and proper time in which to do it. And,
3. That they are under a Necessity of doing this in the time and season thereof.

First. He that is their only Lord and master appoints his servants their work and business. *David* served his generation according to the will of God. This was the rule of his activity; he governed himself in all he did by the direction of God's word, and the intimations of his providence. Our Lord himself who thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet took upon him the office of Mediatour; and acting therein in the quality of a servant, had his work assigned him by the Father; as he himself tells us, *I have finished the work thou gavest me to do (a)*. And how much more must it be so with all his inferiour servants; the blessed God don't only give us mercies to enjoy, as our bountiful benefactor, but he gives us also work to do, as our sovereign Lord and master. Work it self is a gift; service, in this case, is real preferment, and our duty, our privilege. Life certainly is given us for some good end and purpose. It can never be imagined we were sent into the world, meerly to fill up a space, and make up the number of things; Or, only to compass the earth, and treasure up to our selves gold and silver as dust; to climb the tree of preferment, and raise our selves to posts of honour among men; to eat, and drink, and consume the fruits of the earth; to serve, and please ourselves; take our ease, indulge the flesh, and gratify our senses. The heathens themselves, some of them

(a) John 17. 4.

at least, had a juster notion of things than this comes to; one of them, in particular has been famed for a saying of this nature, *I am greater my self, and born to greater things, than that I should be a slave to this vile body.* What name then does he deserve, that dont see these are things far beneath the design of God, and the dignity of man? that such a way of living is too mean and abject for creatures made so little lower than the angels themselves? and, that the powers which God has given us, are capable of far greater and more noble employments? Our great Lord and master has therefore given us work to do, and justly expects us to be faithful in the discharge of it.

Now this work may be considered either as it is common to every man, or peculiar and appropriate to some.

There is a work, which God has given every man to do, from the king on the throne to the beggar on the dunghill: all are bound to glorify God, and secure their own salvation. These two God has joined together, and no man can plead an exemption from them: the highest are not above, nor the meanest below them. It is, or should be the work and business of every man to take care of his own eternal interests; to make good provision for another world, and secure his salvation, by chusing that good part which shall never be taken from him. It was the swaying care of the apostle's life, as he himself tells us, *to be found in Christ (a).* He knew this would be his only security for another world; and therefore made it the principal care of this: there would then be no snare in his comforts, nor sting in his crosses; sin would then be destroyed, and death, by that

(a) Phil. 3. 9.

means, disarmed; nor need he be afraid of a tryal, where he was sure to come off: he will therefore run all hazards, and be content to suffer the loss of all things, counting them but dung, that he may win Christ, and be found in him.

And as every man is thus concerned to secure his own salvation; so to consult and promote God's honour. These two are inseparably twisted together, and in a due subordination do always infer each other. We never bring more glory to God, than when we are most assiduous in working out our own salvation; nor do we ever more consult our own happiness, than when we most promote his glory.

Our work then in the world is to glorify God, by a steady uniform course of obedience to all his laws and commands: by this we adorn the doctrine we profess to believe, and put a lustre upon that grace, by which we expect to be saved. When our light so shines before men, that they can see our good works, they are induced to glorify our Father which is in heaven.

But besides this work, which lies in common upon all, there is also a work that's peculiar to some, and this, either as they are set in a publick station, or are considered in a private capacity: so there is a work peculiar to magistrates and ministers.

The text leads us to observe this of the former, and the occasion, to say something of the latter.

David served his generation, as a King. God chose David his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance (a). This honour God put upon David; he turned his crook into a sceptre, and

(a) Psal. 78, 70, 71.

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made a monarch of a shepherd. Out of all the thousands of *Israel* he chose him to be his servant; advanced him to a throne, and set him among princes, to be a ruler over men, that had been a feeder of sheep. But for what purpose was he brought to the kingdom? not so much to feed himself, as *Jacob* God's people, and *Israel* his inheritance; not merely to make himself and his family great, but to do good with his power; and employ it for the benefit of his subjects. And having obtained help of God, he was both skilful and faithful in the discharge of his office; for, *He fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hand*(a). And, happy the people, that lived under such a government!

And then, Ministers also, as well as magistrates, have a work given them to do that's proper and peculiar to them: and such a work (however others may think of it) as makes all serious and considering persons among them take up the Apostle's words, and ask, *Who is sufficient for these things?* They are entrusted with the truths of Jesus, and the souls of men: these are in a special manner committed to their care, and an important charge it is; in the exercise of which they are to serve their generation by the will of God, as those that know they must give account(b).

And as some have work to do for God, as persons of a publick character; so others are to honour him, by discharging those duties which belong to them in a private capacity: these have a part to act in that lower sphere, wherein the providence of God calls them to move. No man is born for himself, but is to study the welfare of others, and be the servant of his generation. The world was never erected to be an hive for drones,

(a) *Psal.* 78. 72.

(b) *Heb.* 13. 17.

but a stage for action; and therefore, as instruments of God's providence, we are to seek the good of those intellectual societies, which, as rational beings, we help to constitute; and for this end, are obliged to fill up the several relations and callings in which we are placed, with answerable duties; to discharge the particular trusts lodged in our hands, and improve the different talents God has committed to us: that as there is no member in the natural body, be it the eye, the ear, the hand, or foot, but has its particular use, and is serviceable to the whole; so in the body politick, every member may discharge the duty of it's place, for the benefit of the whole community. This then is the work which God has given us to do; and having appointed us our work, he

Secondly, Allows us a time and season to do it in, as seems good to him. There is a time and age wherein we are to serve our generation, which is entirely at the will of him, in whose hands our times are, and whose are all our ways. He that determines what we are to do; where, and in what station we shall be employed, does also determine how long we shall work: and hence it is, that some have a larger, and others a much less portion of time allowed them to work in. He that has our times in his hands, lengthens or contracts them as he pleases. The time, indeed, at the longest is short; the days of our pilgrimage, at most, are but few: but then the work of some is much sooner done, than others; some bear the heat of the whole day, and, according to our way of speaking, are many years in the work of the vineyard, when others labour but one hour of the day: a few years put a period to their lives, and an end to their labours. A wise God, however, so orders it, that every man shall have his portion of time, and no man more;

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'till this is exhausted, no one dies, and after it is so, no one lives. This being the case,

Thirdly, Every man is under a necessity of serving his generation in the day and time allotted for that purpose. Our Saviour himself was under this necessity : so he tells us in those words, *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day for the night comes, wherein no man can work (a)*. When the Father sent him into this world as his servant he gave him work to do, and appointed him a time to do it in ; Christ himself had his day, and no more ; and was under a necessity of doing his work within the limits assigned, and while that day lasted ; for the night comes when there is no opportunity to work. He therefore suits his duty to his day, and his work to his time ; and under the same necessity is every man. The work God has given him to do, must be done in the time and season thereof, after this, all opportunities of service cease for ever. It is therefore with good reason, the wise man gives that advice, *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might*. In this world we are upon business, no one is allowed to be idle ; every man has something to do, and may find himself employment ; now, whatever it be that lyes upon our hands to do, do it, says *Solomon*, with all thy might, with care, vigour and resolution ; do it in the time and season thereof, out of hand, whilst opportunities of service last, and it is called to day, before the night comes. Your working time will soon be over, and you know not how soon, you are hastening to the grave ; and *there's no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom there ; it must therefore be done now, or not at all (b)*. There is then an indispensable necessity of this ; we must work the works of him that sent us into the world while it is

(a) John 9. 4.

(b) Eccles. 9. 10.

day ; and what is so necessary will be as much to our comfort, if we are helped to comply with it, as will appear, from what shall be offered under the next observation, to which we now proceed.

II. When the servants of God have finished their course, and served their generation, they must expect, and should be willing to fall on sleep, and be gathered to their Fathers.

David did not dye before he had served his generation, nor live after it. While his Lord had any thing for him to do, he is content to live, and when he has no further occasion for his service, he willingly resigns, and accepts his *Quietus* ; Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace. This consists of two parts, which are distinctly to be handled.

First, When our work is done, we must expect to fall asleep.

Secondly, We may then do it comfortably, and should therefore do it with great chearfulness, and readiness of mind.

First, When we have done our work, we must expect to lay down our lives, and dye. Till this is done the servants of God are immortal ; as it was in our Saviour's case ; before his hour was come, no attempts against his life succeeded : tho' his enemies seemed not to want an opportunity, as we are sure they did not an inclination ; *for they sought to take him, yet no man laid hold of him* : and the reason of it was, *his hour was not yet come (a)*, that hour, which was to put an end to his life and his work. 'Till this was come, all their designs and endeavours to take him were frustrated, and in vain. In like manner, God's witnesses never dye, 'till they have finished their testimony ; so long as any of their work remains to be done, their days shall certainly be lengthened out. But, on the other

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hand, when they have finished their testimony, they must expect to fall asleep, and be gathered to their Fathers. Before their work is done, they shall not die; and after it is done, they must not live. 'Till our Saviour's hour was come, no attempts to take him succeeded; when it was come, every thing concurred for his apprehension.----- When God's witnesses have finished their testimony, there shall be a concurrence of causes to bring about, and hasten on their death; and no endeavours shall avail to prevent it; physicians and remedies are then of no value; prayers and tears, intercessions and intreaties, won't prevail for their longer stay. No! They must quit the stage of action; and that for such reasons as these,

First, That they may rest from their labours. Death to them, like a sleep, is a cessation from labour, and a refreshment after it. There is indeed, much work in heaven, because that implies duty, and is our privilege; but there's no labour there, for that implies weariness: therefore, the dead that dye in the Lord, are said, *henceforth to rest from their labours, and their works follow them* (a).

Secondly, That they may serve God in a higher station, and a better manner. Good men and faithful ministers are sometimes removed in judgment to others, when it is in mercy to themselves. It's no light affliction to the church of God to be deprived of their excellent and useful labours; but what's so great a loss to others, is an unspeakable gain to themselves. Tho' they rest from their labours here, they are doing temple work in heaven, which is not a place merely of joy and pleasure, but of service and employment; for the truest pleasure arises from the greatest service. They are therefore before the throne of God; and serve him

(a) Rev. 14. 13.

day and night, without ceasing and yet without weariness. *They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.* Such ascriptions of praise to the most high and holy God, is the incessant work and will be the eternal employment of the blessed above.

Thirdly, That they may make room for others. *The Lord, we are told, spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, to mount Nebo, and die in the mount, and be gathered to thy people (a),* he was it seems served with this order that self-same day; for having done his work, why should he stay, tho' but a day longer? this is what he must not expect, and having received such an intimation from God, he does not desire. His work was only to lead *Israel* through the wilderness, and bring them to the borders, *Joshua* must put them into the possession of the promised land. *Go up therefore, says God, and die, thou hast done all that for which I raised thee up,* the further progress of this great work is reserved to another; lay down therefore and resign to thy successor. *Solomon* was to build the temple; *David* must only prepare materials for it, and having herein served his generation, and performed all that God required and allowed him to do, he must fall on sleep, that he may make room for him, who should have the honour of doing, what was only in his father's heart to do.

Fourthly, That they may receive their reward. They shall not always labour and toil; there is a time for 'em to enter into their rest, when they shall receive the end of their faith, and the fruit of their labours: that glorious recompence which a gracious God bestows on all his faithful followers. But this will as properly fall under the next head, which is this.

(a) Deut. 32. 49, 50.

Secondly, That having served their generation they may with great satisfaction of mind, and should with equal readiness lay down their lives and die. When *David* had served his own generation, by the will of God, he fell on sleep. It must be so! God will have it so; and he is content it should be so; the will of the Lord be done. In this holy and obedient manner should all the faithful servants of God, resign up themselves to the sovereign disposer of all things, and willingly leave this world at his command. This they ought to do for the following reasons.

First, Because they have then done their work. When once it comes to this, that they have finished the work which was given them to do; so that their Lord has no longer need of their service, nor will make any further use of them here below, what have they to do, but die! why should they desire to stay, tho' but a day longer here; the next thing is, that God would glorify them with himself in heaven. When an Ambassador hath fully executed his commission, he willingly takes his audience of leave according to the direction of his sovereign, that he may return home, and give an account of his negotiations abroad. How much more should this be the disposition of those that bear such a character in the kingdom of Jesus! We have a remarkable instance of this in the person of *Moses* the servant of the Lord. God had said unto him, as has been observed before, *Go up and die*; this order he receives with an entire submission, tho' there were many things especially at that time to make him reluctant. He had not yet fully attained the years of the lives of his fathers; several of 'em dyed some years older than himself, whose lives were not equally serviceable with his. He was its true now grown old, but then he did not feel the decays of age; he was still as fit for service as ever; his eyes were not dim;

dim; nor was his natural force abated: and must he die, in this state of health and vigour? when he is not worn out by age, nor wasted by sickness and pain. His life was neither burdensome to himself, nor useless to others. He had spent many years in toilsome employments; particularly he had felt the burden of a forty years march thro' a waste and howling wilderness, and after he had gone thro' all the fatigues of a desert, must he be denied the pleasures of *Canaan*? He was now upon the very edge of the good land; and when come so near, must he only see it with his eyes at this distance, but never set foot thereon? Shall another enter upon his labours, and have the honour of finishing what he had brought so near to perfection? must he now go up and die? this seems a hard saying! and many things of this nature would have been pleaded, had he consulted with flesh and blood.

But the man *Moses* was very meek; God will have it so; and he has nothing to object. Once indeed he prayed he might go over *Jordan*, and see the good land beyond it, but the Lord would not hear him, and since it must not be, he speaks no more of this matter, but quietly submits, the will of the Lord be done; heaven is better than *Canaan*. So *Moses the servant of the Lord, died there according to the word of the Lord*(a). At the mouth of the Lord, says the original; which gave occasion for that saying among the *Jews*, that God sucked his soul out of his body with a kiss. But the plain meaning of it is, he died at the direction and by the appointment of God. He comes on, and goes off at the word of command. An intimation from God is enough. If he tells him, his work is done, he has no farther occasion for his service, he willingly resigns and takes his *Quietus*. Like one of your former mi-

(a) Deut. 34. 5.

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nisters, whose name and memory is still precious among you, who being asked in his last sickness *how he did*, readily answered, *going home, as every honest man should, when his work is done* (a).

Secondly, Because then they are to receive their reward: the prospect of this was the apostle's rejoicing and made the thoughts of his approaching death so easy to him, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*; he had done his work, fought the good fight, and finished his course, and now comes the reward, *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day* (b). A glorious recompence of reward, not of debt but of grace. And how surprizing is the bounty of our God herein? for what proportion is there between the best services on earth, and the transcendent glories of heaven? here is a crown, a crown of righteousness! a crown of glory! a crown of life, that never fades; that shall never be taken from us! Such honours the great God confers upon poor mortals! such rewards he dispenses to his faithful servants. All the sufferings and services of this present life, are not worthy to be compared with that glory which shall then be revealed. This is more than amends for all the labour and pains any have taken in his service.

And they sure, may sleep with ease and die with comfort, that have a well grounded hope, and believing prospect of such a blessed immortality. Shall they be unwilling to enter into their rest and receive their crown? is there any act of obedience, that deserves more cheerfully to be performed than this? should we count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations, and shall we not much more do so, when we are going for ever to be delivered

(a) Mr. Howe's Funeral Sermon for Mr. Mead. (b) 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8.

from them? should they be loth to die, that are going to Christ, and descend into the grave, not as condemned prisoners; but as triumphant conquerors to be crowned with glory, honour, immortality and eternal life?

Thirdly, Because tho' they do fall asleep, they shall certainly awake again, and that with joy. The prospect our Saviour had of his own resurrection, and the glory that should follow, sweetened to him the bitterest sufferings, and carried him chearfully through death it self, as *David* tells us in those words, in which he speaks the language of Christ, *I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right-hand, I shall not be moved; therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope; thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right-hand are pleasures for evermore* (a).

And as our dying Lord did, so dying christians may lye down to sleep in the grave, with a believing hope of this joyfull resurrection; their bodies must and do see corruption, but their flesh rests in hope of being rais'd to a blessed immortality. They may go to sleep with the greatest composure of mind, being assured they shall awake again, and when they do so, it shall be with God's perfect likeness, which will give them the fullest satisfaction; according to that divine song, *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness* (b), I now fall asleep; it must be so; and I am not uneasy at it; I shall awake again, and when I do awake, and come to open my eyes, I shall behold the face of God; and by that vision be made perfectly like him; and with that likeness, be fully satisfy'd.

(a) Psal. 16. (b) Psal. 17. 15.

When I awake with thy likeness, I shall be satisfied;
 having all my wishes and desires, I know I shall;
 and in confidence of this I'll go quietly to rest.

Having now gone through the two general heads of discourse, I come to shew what use the things we have heard may be of to us, and how we are to improve them. Now this may be done,

First, By way of inference.

Secondly, By way of direction.

Use 1. There are fundry inferences to be deduced from hence as,

Inf. 1. It appears from what has been said, and is too evident to be denyed, *That many persons live quite beside the true end of life.* They dont serve their generation by the will of God, but themselves by the will of the flesh. So far are they from being servants to their generation, they are the burden, the curse and plague of it. They entirely pervert the end of life, and turn it to quite another use, than that for which it was given. Their time is not lived but lost. Their lives are either sinfulness or barrenness. They are hastning to another world; but dont seem at all to consider, for what end they were sent into this; or rather act as if they thought, for this end were they born, and for this cause came they into this world, that they might eat, and drink, sleep and play for a few years and then die at last, and there should be an end of them. Such brutish men there are and fools in the world, that have no more thought nor consideration. They serve not the Lord Christ, but themselves. They seek their own things, their own honour, profit and contentment, but not the things of Christ; instead of glorifying God on the earth, which is the chief end of life, they pollute his honour and profane his name.

Inf. 2.

Inf. 2. The servants of Christ must first labour and then receive their reward. After *David* had served his generation he went to rest; but not before. When our Saviour had finished the work given him to do; he then prays, *glorify me with that glory, I had with thee, before the world began.* He don't ask, nor expect his reward, till he had done his work. *If a man strive for masteries, he is not crowned except he strive lawfully: the husbandman, labouring first, must be a partaker of the fruits* (a). He must plow and sow before he can be suppos'd to reap. In like manner, christians must first conflict and then triumph; run their race, and finish their course and then receive the prize. *I have fought the good fight, &c. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*

Inf. 3. The fairest opportunities for service, and the greatest capacities, as well as inclination to improve them, cannot prolong our days beyond the time which God has set us. There have been some men in the world, were it lawful, one would be tempted to wish them immortal; but even these must go the way of all flesh, when once their time is come. Not only the sloathful but the faithful servants. The best of 'em, those that are most eminently fitted for their work; most painful, laborious and successful in it, these must die, and sometimes very soon. None of the prophets live for ever; some of them, not very long. God said to *Moses*, go up and die, when his eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated. The same thing, God said to him, whose death we now lament, in the prime of his days, in the midst of his labours, when we might be apt to please our selves with the hopes of many years service yet to come.

(a) 2 Tim. 2, 6.

And when life is required, it must be resigned. No man has power over the spirit to retain it, when its summon'd to return to God that gave it. Its not wisdom or grace, it is not usefulness or service, much less any human strength, or worldly grandeur that can protect us against the arrests of death; for God takes away as he sees good (a).

Inf. 4. The death of God's servants, is in a more especial manner under the direction, and by the appointment of heaven. *Moses* died at the word of the Lord; not only in obedience to his command, but by his direction, and at the appointment of his will. So did *David*, as these words tell us, if you will allow them another reading, which they are capable of, *viz. David, when he had ministered unto, and served his generation, fell on sleep, by the will or counsel of God.* Some, I know, dislike this reading, because then, there is nothing peculiar to *David*, it being common for all men to die, by the intervention of a divine counsel and decree; whereas *David's* serving his generation by the will of God, is peculiar to him, and all good men; since no others make the will of God, the rule of their actions, and the scope of their lives. But however this be, the thing itself is sure, all the circumstances of our death, the time, the place, the means, and the manner, are under a divine appointment, and we may rest satisfied, God never gives a commission to death, but when its fittest for his servants to lay down their lives; nor are they suffered to die, when it wou'd be better for them to live; *for precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints (b).*

Inf. 5. Its a blessed thing, when death meets us, after a life of real usefulness and service in the

(a) Ezek. 16. 50. (b) Psal. 116. 15.

world. *David* after he had served his generation, fell on sleep, and how sweet must rest be at night, after a day of so much pains and labour? Tho' he was told, he must not have the honour of building an house for God; yet he continued his vast preparations to the last, and fell asleep with his work in his hand. *And blessed is that servant, who when his Lord comes he finds so doing.* The apostle looks down into the grave with comfort, and upon death with pleasure, he speaks of it as one glad to meet it, *I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand,* when it came at the end of a life in which he cou'd say, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith.* Having acted his part with so much honour, he quits the stage with pleasure. But on the other hand,

Inf. 6. That must be a very uncomfortable, and inglorious death, that comes at the end of a useless, and sinful life. It's a dreadful thing to leave the world, before a man has at all answered the end, and dispatched the business for which he was born into it. He must be hardened to a prodigious degree, that can be content to go out of the world under these circumstances. With what patience can that man think of death, that never answered the end of life; and of leaving this world, when he has made no provision for another? O its sad falling asleep at night after a day sauntered away we know not how, and of which we can give no manner of account, at least no tolerable one. A life that has been swail'd away and consumed in vanity and sloath, without any serious thoughts of God, or our duty; but especially a life that has been filled up with the greatest provocations against heaven; in which almost nothing has been done according to the will of God, but every thing contrary to it, a life so useless, so

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sinful as this, must be concluded at last with a very wretched and miserable death.

II. *Use*: This may be applied by way of direction under the three following heads. If it be as we have heard. Then,

Direct. 1. Let us be contented to stay till we have done our work, and willing to go when we have done it. *David* neither slept before he had served his generation, nor lived after it.

This cautions us on the one hand against the rashness of some, even good men, who have passionately wished for death, before the time was come for them to die. Those two great prophets, *Elijah* and *Jonah*, under some trouble and disappointment grew cross and peevish, and then God must in all haste take away their lives, though their work was not yet done: It's enough, said the former, now, O Lord, *take away my life*. But whatever our exercises are, its not enough till God sees meet. Nothing can justify such a weariness of life, till our time is fully come, and our work be done. The apostle was in a *Dilemma*, between life and death; The Joy and gain it wou'd be to himself, made death desirable; the grief and loss this wou'd be to others, made life eligible; *I am*, says he, *in a strait between two* (a strait which among all the distresses there are upon mankind, very few people are in) *having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better for me; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you; and with a generous spirit of self-denial, he at length chooses what was needful for others, rather than what wou'd be gainful to himself. No good man shou'd wish to be in heaven, before he has done and suffered the will of God on earth. We must not, like disgusted courtiers, resign in a pet, and lay down, before God thinks fit to dismiss us his service.*

And

And yet, on the other hand, a discharge from life, shou'd always be acceptable to us, when God sees fit to give it us; and we shou'd be as willing to go when we have done our work, as contented to stay till it be done. When our Saviour had finished the work given him to do, he then prays to be glorified with his Father. When *Simeon* had lived to see what was promised him, *Now Lord*, saith he, *let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word (a)*. After such a sight, he is content his eyes shou'd be clos'd. There is little in the world worth looking at, to a man that has Christ in his arms, and heaven in his eye. He had welcom'd Christ, and cou'd now welcome death: *Let me depart, according to thy word*: till this, I was told I shou'd not dye, and after this, I dont desire to live. Go up, says God to *Moses*, and dye; *Moses* did so; there is no noise, no striving, no trouble in the case; he goes to sleep when he is bid; so *Moses died at the word of the Lord*. Had there been any further service for him to do; might he in any thing have yet been useful to the church of God, he is content to live: but if there be nothing more for him to do, his Lord has no farther need of him, he is as willing to dye. Happy souls! Thus got above the sinful love of life, and the slavish fear of death!

Direct. 2. Let us then endeavour to understand, and perform the duty of our day and place. Oh that there was such an heart in us! that we were so wise as to know, and do our work in the time and season of it. That we had more of *David's* spirit, and were helped to follow his excellent example, making God's glory the scope of our lives, and his will the rule of our actions; then shou'd

(a) Luke 2. 26, 29.

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we serve our generation according to the will of God.

Let us, then, in the first place, look well to our own salvation. Nothing in this world is of such importance, as the securing our own eternal interests, and making good provision for another world. This is the most weighty, the most serious thing that can be presented to our thoughts; that can entertain our minds, and employ our hours.

And then, let us be servants to our generation; blessings to the world, and church of God. Be of publick spirits; do what good we can in our day and place. Lay hold of, and improve all seasons and opportunities of service. God hangs the great things of eternity upon the small wires of time. He has not yet said, time is no more with us: but who knows how soon he may? It was *Jerusalem's* ruin, that she did not know in her day, the things which belonged to her peace. Whatever therefore our hand finds to be done, let us do it with all our might. And set about the work of the Lord in his strength: rely on the Spirit's grace for your assistance, and the Redeemer's righteousness for your acceptance. If it will then be well done, and we shall have comfort in it.

Direct. 3. Let what has been said, be a means to quiet our minds under the removal of the most faithful and useful servants of God. The workings of our affections, are often very irregular, with respect to those that are fallen asleep: especially if they were persons of eminent use and service in the church of God; and still more so, if those were our particular acquaintance, endeared friends, and near relations; we secretly wish, that they did live, and immoderately grieve they do not.

I should not wonder if there were, in this congregation, many weeping eyes and aching hearts
this

this day ; I shou'd rather wonder if it were otherwise. Shou'd it be asked, wherefore look ye so sad to day? you wou'd conclude he that asks the question must be a great stranger to your case, and not know what has happened ; he wou'd not wonder at so many sad countenances, if he knew the occasion. That you are bereaved of your dear and faithful Minister ; deprived of him that went in and out among you ; have lost the shepherd that fed you ; one that was your guide to lead you ; him that watched for your souls, and was the helper of your joy ; that loved you ; longed after you, in the bowels of Christ ; that wished, prayed for, and sought your welfare : And, is it any wonder you look so sad at such a parting as this ! *Is it nothing to you that pass by, that the hand of God has touched us ?* Nothing to you, that a person of his excellent spirit ; so well fitted for his work ; so intent upon it ; delighted with it ; zealous and faithful in it, shou'd be taken away in the prime of his days, in the midst of his usefulness ; when, according to the course of nature, he might have been continued many years a blessing to the church of God, and we must now see his face, and hear his voice no more. Is this nothing to you ? I can, for one, sincerely bear a part with you in this mourning ; and vent my own grief in *David's* words, when he lamented the death of one dear to him as his own soul, *I am distressed for thee, my brother ; very pleasant hast thou been to me.* Thy death distresses my soul ! I am grieved at the heart for this separation ! Would to God, thou didst live ! But such resentments must not be too far indulged. I would recall these words, and take them back again. Shou'd we wish him to live that has done his work ; and is now gone to rest ? No ! let this quiet us,

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He has done his work. — Funeral commendations, as one says, gathered out of the spoils of truth, are neither to the honour of them on whom they are bestowed, nor to the reputation of those by whom they are given. I wou'd therefore be sparing herein; and especially, when I consider how much more suitable that is to the temper and disposition of the deceased, who never affected the applause of men himself, and was wont to express his dislike of such discourses at the funerals of others.

But the great esteem and value I must own I had for him, will not suffer me to be altogether silent; and yet, I hope, will not carry me too far in this matter: sure it does not when I tell the world, what you well know, that he was indeed a man in whom was an excellent spirit; one that made it his business to serve God in his day and place: and, as he was first careful to save his own soul, which he was betimes; so was he very desirous to be instrumental in saving the souls of others: for which reason, when come to years, like *Moses*, he refus'd what would have been much more for his worldly advantage and reputation; and gave himself up to the work of the ministry. And having entered upon it, how much his heart was in his work, with what delight and pleasure, with what zeal and fervour, he fulfilled his ministry; with what life and warmth, with what plainness and evidence he testified the grace of God, you are witnesses. This was his darling subject, and what he dwelt upon with the greatest pleasure: taking pattern from the great apostle, he determined not to know any thing, comparatively among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and yet so divided the word, as to give every one their portion.

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He always express'd a just and commendable zeal for the great truths of the gospel, and very much lamented the errors of the day. He did himself keep the faith pure and inviolable, without any indefensible extreams; and it was no small concern to him, to observe that prophecy so much fulfilled, *that in the latter times some should depart from the faith*, keeping at the same time his eye upon that divine admonition, *speaking the truth in love*, as that which the gospel so often recommends, and by which it is so greatly adorned.

How sweet he was in his temper and disposition; how winning in his behaviour; how prudent in his conduct, and inoffensive to all men, being hardly brought, so far as I could ever observe, to speak evil of any man, are things I need not tell you: they are known to all that knew any thing of him, and will be acknowledged by those that conversed most with him.

His life, in short, was of an entire piece with his doctrine; holy and unblameable, as that was pure and uncorrupt.

And his death was answerable to both; he dyed, as he lived, in faith; full of comfort, peace and Joy; having an abundant entrance ministred unto him, into the everlasting kingdom of his Lord and Saviour. He was at first visited with a fever, this was followed by a lingering illness, which for a time he did not seem to apprehend of dangerous consequence; but at length, finding it grow upon him, he sees death in the distemper, but without any terror in his mind; when he began to perceive his work was done, he then rejoiced to think he was going home, tho' till then he had expressed a willingness and desire to stay. With pleasure and transport he repeated those words, *I have fought the good fight, &c. henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* And being asked,

if

if he had *light in the valley?* answered, *I have, my Redeemer is mine, and I am his.* When his time drew nearer still that he must dye, he expressed himself desirous to spend that little breath he had left, in bearing his testimony to the reality and power of religion, for the encouragement and comfort of others; and especially his surviving relations, of whom, when gathered about him, he takes a solemn leave; saying, in effect, "Behold, 'I dye and I am not afraid, no! I am willing' and desirous to dye, and be with Christ;" with this sweet composure of mind, with this divine calm, he meets the command of God; having in himself a blessed experience of the solid, substantial supports of religion, now that he was entering upon another world. As he always believed what he preached; so he now felt in himself the comfort of those things he had so often recommended to others, and with his dying breath endeavours to give those about him a good opinion of religion, and to confirm them in the sentiments they had of it. It was his earnest desire, that God might be magnified in him, whether in life or death; and therefore as he had been a zealous preacher of Christ in his life, he was a faithful witness for him in his death. And how precious shou'd their memories be unto us, who thus lived, and thus dy'd! going out of the world, says one, in this manner, is like the burning of rich and fragrant spices, which leave a sweet perfume behind them.

He is now no more in this world; but has served his generation! we are ready to say, alas, it was but a little while he did it! its true a few years finished his course. His was a race but of thirty-six years: but we must consider, it was as long as He saw fit to employ him, in whose hands
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are all our times, and who never permits a premature and untimely death in his servants.

And having thus served his generation, what may further quiet us under this stroke is, that he is now entred into peace. He that thus lived by the will of God, and dyed at his word, we may be well assured now sleeps in Jesus; that he is, and ever will be, with the Lord, which is far better for him than to abide in the flesh. And shall we repine at another's happiness, whilst we lament our own loss? shou'd we wish to keep them out of heaven that have done their work on earth? let us rather attend to our own duty, and consider what this providence speaks to us all; and more especially to his surviving relations, and the flock over which he was overseer. The former are concerned to see the hand of God in this sore rebuke. *Hear then the Rod, and who has appointed it: despise not the chastning of the Lord, nor faint when you are corrected of him: humble your selves under the mighty hand of God.* Copy after the pattern of his faith and obedience, who is now no more among you, so far as he was a follower of Christ in his life and death. You know how he lived; you saw how he dyed. And shou'd many of the passages of his life be forgot, his last and concluding act of obedience ought to be remembred, as worthy of imitation, and most likely to encourage it. His dying words, it's to be hoped, made deep impressions upon your minds, and won't easily be forgot.

And to those that were his particular charge and care, as the flock of which he had the oversight, I wou'd say,

See the hand of God in what has befallen you; consider why it is God thus contends with you. It may occasion some thoughtfulness, that you shou'd, in the space of a few years, be so often
called

called to this work. I persuade my self you cannot but be sensible of, and deeply affected with the breach God has now made upon you; the Lord sanctify it to the spiritual benefit of every one.

Remember what you have received and heard from your several ministers, and hold fast, continuing in the things you have learned. — Your ministers indeed are fallen asleep, gathered to their fathers, and see corruption: but he, to whom the promise was made, is Jesus, the same eternal God, yesterday, to day, and for ever. To him therefore that was dead, but is alive, and lives for ever; to him let your eyes be for a sanctified use of this late providence, and for needful conduct under your present circumstances, that you may be happily guided in making up this wide breach. And may he that is the great Shepherd of the sheep, still make provision for this part of Zion's poor, and abundantly bless the provision you already have.

Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



G O D

G O D *seen in the Mount: Or,*
Israel's Deliverance, and their
Enemies Destruction.

A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D at the
M E R C H A N T S - L E C T U R E
in Broad-street.
M A Y the 22d, 1722.

EXODUS XV. 9, 10, 11.

*The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will
divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them,
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.*

*Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them:
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.*

*Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? Who
is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises,
doing wonders?*



*HE works of the Lord, as the Psalmist
observeth, are great and sought out by
those that have pleasure in them. I shall
therefore now turn aside for a while,
to behold those dispensations of pro-
vidence, which manifest the goodness
of God in preventing that mischief, which man
had wickedness enough to contrive. And this I
pro-*

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propose to do, in opening that passage of scripture, I have now read to you. The words are a part of *Moses's* song of triumph, after an amazing deliverance, from a danger out of which they cou'd see no way of escape. In them he personates the *Egyptians*, and gives a most elegant representation of their thoughts and purposes. This is their project and they are full of it. Having laid the scheme, they send out their thoughts to forestall their contentments, and feed themselves with the pleasures of a victory, before they engage in the conflict.

I have often in my own thoughts compar'd the spirit and temper of our enemies, ever since the reformation; especially since the revolution, to that which is described in these words, and therefore judg'd them a very proper subject for my design.

The enemy said, that is, *Pharaoh* and his courtiers, indeed all his people; then the avow'd enemies of *God's Israel*. They said within themselves; they said to one another, they said it with one voice, and with one consent, they went into the design as one man, and therefore it's expressed in the singular number; this was the language, one and all, of their hearts, their Mouths and actions, *I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil?* But they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understood they his counsel; they say they will pursue and overtake, and divide the spoil, but God says, they shall not touch a hair of their heads. They aim'd at *Israel's* ruin; but God intended theirs, *Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters*; which puts a song of praise into his peoples mouths, *Who is like thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like thee, glorious in boldness, fear ful in praises, doing wonders?* In the words we may consider,

I. The

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- I. The enemies resolution and design. And,
- II. Their defeat. After which,
- III. I shall make a particular application and improvement of both.

I. Then we are to consider the enemies resolution and design, contain'd in those words: *I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them, &c.* A resolution that speaks

First, Their restlessness and impatience. *Israel* that had been a burdensome stone to the *Egyptians*, was now removed out of their border, and had left 'em in the peaceable possession of their own country; *Pharaoh* enjoy'd his crown and kingdom, his great men shar'd the honours, the riches, and pleasures of a court amongst them. *Moses* turn'd his back upon all these: and could they not then tarry at home and be quiet? Who gave them any disturbance?

But all this does not satisfy them; they can't be easy with their own possessions, unless they may have their will upon a people they hate, and would destroy. As *Haman* confess'd to his own reproach, and the eternal disgrace of this world, after he had reckon'd up more than enough to satisfy any reasonable man, *All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai sit at the King's gate* (a). One bitter ingredient spoil'd the pleasure of all his enjoyments; he had no comfort in his life, his family, his estate and honours, so long as *Mordecai* had a place in the king's gate, this one life made his a very restless and uneasy one, in the greatest affluence of this world's goods, and therefore he resolves to be his death. So all that the *Egyptians* possess'd, avail'd them nothing, so long as *Israel* was not in their hands, and they had not power as formerly to op-

(a) Esther 5. 13.

press them. Nor can they have any rest till they have fetch'd them back, that they may make them serve with rigor, and imbitter their lives with hard bondage.

Thus restless and uneasy are our enemies; tho' they do, or might, peaceably enjoy all that can reasonably be desired to make men happy. They are in no trouble, but what they bring upon themselves; they might sit down in quiet under their own vines and figtrees, having none to make them afraid. But all they do or might enjoy avails them nothing, whilst the King sits on the throne; and unless an idol of no body knows who's making be set up in his room: unless the government be overturned, and they have power in their hands to oppress others, and bring them under persecution by having laws enacted, or let loose against them that are the quiet in the land: these are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest: they must and will be in motion, though they meddle to their own hurt. Turbulent spirits, like wind pent up in some subterraneous cavities, that will never be quiet till they have vented themselves in some mischievous design. So long as they see the King on the throne, and the men they don't like in power; so long as others enjoy their liberty, and their hands are tyed up that they cannot devour the men more righteous than themselves; all they enjoy avails them nothing, and therefore they say, they will pursue, that's their resolution, nothing shall hinder them: they will not tamely give up their cause, nor suffer us peaceably to enjoy, what our God has so mercifully, indeed miraculously given us; and therefore are continually devising some mischief or other, and endeavouring to disturb our peace by invasions from abroad, or insurrections at home; they will pursue, tho' it would be good advice,
could

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could they take it, *Tarry at home; why shouldst thou meddle to thine own hurt?* for this resolution,

Secondly, Speaks their *madness* and *infatuation*. *The enemy said, I will pursue*; and this a people in whose favour God had so often, and so signally declared himself, for whose deliverance he had wrought so many miracles, for whose sake he had inflicted on them so many plagues, this people they will pursue! There had been the plainest indications of God's purpose with respect unto 'em, that he would have them releas'd, and they should no longer be held under bondage, he had commanded *Pharaoh* to let them go once and again, plagued him and his people many a time for refusing it, and at last forced them to dismiss 'em by a mighty hand and an out-stretched arm: now one would have thought their former plagues should have been a warning to them; that it must be obvious to *Pharaoh* and his people, they did but burn their fingers, whenever they meddled with *Israel*, and it was better for them now to desist; one would think they should have concluded before it was too late, as they did when it was so, *The Lord fights for his people, and against us*; and in effect bids us, let them alone, meddling with them will be to our own hurt; we have begun to fall before them already, and if God be on their side, we shall not be able to prevail against them, but must surely fall before them (a), therefore let us pursue them no longer; but the things of their peace were hid from their eyes, and their heart hardened to their own ruin; their rage and malice makes them daring and inconsiderate, so that they hasted to the snare tho' it was spread in their sight. This shews their infatuation! It was downright frenzy! A perfect deliracy! What! will they

(a) *Ester* 1. 13.

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fight against God! are they stronger than he? han't he already made them smart for refusing to let them go? and when he has forced his people out of their hands, will he suffer their enemies to recover them? madness it self thus to go against all the intimations of providence; and fight against a people on whose side God had so evidently declared himself. But whom God intends to destroy, he first infatuates.

I wou'd not exasperate; but cannot help saying, our enemies seem to be under such an infatuation. God has many a time taken off their chariot-wheels, and made them drive heavily on; yet don't they acknowledge so much as even the hardned *Egyptians* did at last, *God fights for them; let us therefore fly from them and pursue them no farther.* No: how many disappointments soever they have met with, still they harden themselves, and hope to succeed at last. They will pursue, tho' there are evident tokens that God fights against them, and tho' all former attempts have been baffl'd they hope the next will succeed better. Which brings us to observe,

Thirdly, Their vain confidence and presumption. The enemy said, I will pursue; and not only so; but, I will overtake, and overcome, I will divide the spoil. What insolence and pride is here! how do they vaunt themselves before hand! They resolve to pursue; and don't doubt but they shall overtake; and when they overtake, are as sure to overcome; so sure they are of the prey, that they have already in their thoughts divided it among themselves. Thus they promise themselves the victory, before they begin the battle; and boast at putting on the harness, which only belongs to him, that puts it off. So confident they are, that they shall carry all before 'em. Thus our enemies please themselves with the hopes of success, and don't doubt,

doubt, but as they have always pursued they shall at last overtake; and one time or other find a favourable Juncture, as the *Egyptians* thought now presented itself to them; when *Israel* was hemm'd in on every side, so that there was no way of escape, but they must unavoidably fall into their hands; and then their lust shou'd be satisfied upon them; which leads us to observe,

Fourthly, Their malice and cruelty. *The enemy said, I will pursue; I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, I will draw forth my sword, my lust shall be satisfied on them, my hand shall destroy them.* Thus the enemy raged, and foam'd with revenge. They breathe nothing but slaughter, and death. I'll kill, I'll consume, I'll exterminate, I'll fill my soul with them; *my lust shall be satisfied upon them*; their lust of covetousness in seizing their goods, and of revenge in spilling their blood. Nothing wou'd satisfy their eager appetite, but the blood of the *Israelites*; therefore they said, I'll draw forth my sword, and sheath it in their bowels, then shall my lust be satisfied: this will please me at the heart: there is nothing sweeter than revenge; that is a craving lust, and to have this satisfied is like food to the stomach. Cursed be their rage for it was cruel! They talk of nothing less than killing, slaying, destroying, seizing and dividing the prey; embruing their hands in the blood of those they hate, and this will satisfy them.

And has not this been the secret thought, indeed the open language of our enemies? han't they vowed revenge, and when this is taken, said, they shall be satisfied? let their own consciences speak whether, this be not so. Have they not said in effect, I will pursue and overtake, and when I do so, I'll seize the prey, divide the spoil, draw out my sword, wreak my malice, and be revenged on 'em at last for all the disappointments we have met

with. They have large accounts for the time they have been kept out of what they call their right; and will make others pay the reckoning at last, when their charge and loss shall be fully reimbursed. They thirst for blood; a good draught of this will satisfy their lust and quench their thirst. Barbarous lust and cruel to which only a full cup of blood wou'd be a pleasant draught. Once more, this language and resolution,

Fifthly, Speaks their prophaneness and impiety. I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw forth my sword, my hand shall destroy them; or, I will possess them? What an impious and prophane rant is here! Not a word of God in all this. No thought of him, or of the changes of providence! Here's no such reservation as that; if the Lord will; tho' some of the heathens by the light of nature saw a need to begin with God, as appears from their à *Jove principium*, ἔκ τινος θεοῦ ἰδέαν and *Cui deo* used in the beginning of their undertakings. No! But I will pursue, whether God would have me or no, and without asking counsel at his mouth: nay, against the plainest indications, that this wou'd be displeasing to him; and tho' he in effect had told them, it wou'd be meddling to their hurt and they had better tarry at home. And not only so, but when they pursue, they will overtake, and they will overcome; they will pursue, whether God gives them leave, and they will overtake whether he gives them power. Here is no thought of a superior force to curb their insolence. They promise themselves success in their designs, without fearing any controul of providence. Whereas every man ought to say, if the Lord will *I shall live and do this or that*; they foam out their rage, and say they will do this or that, whether God will or no. *I will pursue, I will overtake,*

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will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them, all this whether God will or no; our hand is high, we will do all this, without the Lord and even against him. Heaven itself shou'd not controul them; an impious resolution! full of atheism, and a profane contempt of God, and his power, and no wonder it met with the success it did, for the proudest amongst the living shall know, that the most High rules amongst the children of men; and verily there is a God that judges in the earth, and can cross the projects of the most ambitious and aspiring; as he actually did here. For says Moses, thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters, &c. which brings us to consider,

II. Their defeat, where we may observe, the entireness, the author, and the acknowledgments of a thankful people to God for it.

First, The defeat was absolute and entire. The sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Great resolutions against God, meet with great disappointments. These mighty boasters in a very little time, are become breathless carcases. Israel soon saw them dead upon the sea-shore; they that had been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, are now gone down to the pit, not so much as one of them remaining alive. They intended one thing, and God another; for man designs, but the execution depends entirely upon the will and pleasure of heaven. The prey slipped thro' their fingers, when they were just ready to grasp it. They did pursue; that they might do; God permits them to do it: but they never could overtake, and therefore did not divide the spoil, nor satisfy their lust; no! that they never shall do. Here God interposes and stops them in their career, the sea quenched the fire

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of their rage and sup'd up all their hopes; so that where they expected victory they found a grave. *They sank as lead into the mighty waters.* They did pursue but it was to their own hurt.

Secondly, We have the author and cause of the defeat. What hindred their overtaking, when they did pursue? nothing but the immediate hand of God. They acknowledge this was not owing to their virtue, to their merit, wisdom, or arms, *Thou didst blow with thy wind, &c. Thy right-hand dashed in pieces the enemy, v. 6. The Lord is become glorious in power; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east-wind; and made the sea dry land; He transformed the liquid element into walls of brasse, and made that a walk to his people, which when returned to its course proved a grave to their enemies? for they assaying to follow after were drowned, Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hands of the Egyptians.* So dear were they to him, that rather than one hair of their heads should perish, he'll sink the flower of a whole nation to the bottom of the sea. *Fear not, says the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine, I gave Egypt for thy ransom, I will give men for thee, and people for thy life (a).* He values not whole nations for the security of his people. *Egypt* is laid waste by one plague after another, their first born slain, and their whole host buried in the sea, to force a way for *Israel* into the promised land: for precious are his people in his sight: now of all this we have,

Thirdly, The peoples grateful acknowledgments to God. *Who is like thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises,*

(a) *Isaiah* 43. 1, 3, 4.

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doing wonders? they give God the glory of this deliverance, as a being of matchless perfections! *Who is like thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods? Egypt* is full of them; but which of them is to be compar'd with thee? let them stand forth and make the competition if they are able. There is no God like unto him, whose perfections are infinite, and therefore transcendent, and incomparable. Here's the purest praise, and the highest expression of humble adoration, and thankfulness. And as they acknowledge him to be a being of matchless perfection in general, so they adore him for his holiness in particular: *Thou art glorious in holiness.* That's his chief glory and excellency. This appeared in the destruction of *Pharaoh*, and in the deliverance of his people. *Righteous art thou, O Lord*, because thou hast thus judged. His justice is unblemished in striking thro' his enemies in this day of his wrath, when their wickedness had made them ripe for ruin. None but must subscribe to his righteousness in crushing them without mercy, who had no mixture of compassion towards his people. They acknowledge also, that he is fearful in praises. Awful and tremendous in the very things for which he is to be praised. What's joyful to his people, is dreadful in itself, and terrible to his enemies. The very deliverance is fearful, being accompanied with the destruction of so many thousand souls, and that in such an awful and unheard of manner. He answers his people this way, by terrible things in righteousness. When he appears glorious in their salvation, he is no less terrible in the destruction of their enemies. He is therefore to be praised with humble awe and reverence.

So fearful was God in this deliverance, that it struck a terror into the minds of distant nations, upon whose confines *Israel* was to march, who bore them

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them no good will, and might be jealous of their number, and without such a remarkable appearance of providence, would have been ready enough to have confederated against them, in hopes to finger some of the prey. *The people shall hear and be afraid, sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina, then the Dukes of Edom shall be amazed, the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them, all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away; fear and dread shall fall upon them, by the greatness of thine arm they shall be still as a stone, till thy people pass over* (a). This deliverance would terrify their enemies, and quite dishearten them; they must conclude it in vain to fight against a people, in whose favour God had so visibly declared himself. And such an effect we may hope the various appearances of God in our behalf, may have upon some of our neighbours, they may fear and be afraid, and made still as a stone, that might perhaps have been willing to do us a mischief, if they had but a fair opportunity. Again,

They acknowledge God's doing wonders; things far above the power, and out of the common course of nature. The dividing a sea at one time, and then bringing it back to its former course again, carrying his people thro' it, and burying their enemies in it: These are wonders of power, of grace and mercy to a people altogether unworthy of so great a deliverance, for which he is therefore humbly to be ador'd.

III. I proceed now to the application. And,

Inf. 1. It appears from hence that the *enemies of God's Israel are cruel and bloody.* Here's nothing breathed but slaughter and death. They will pursue, they will overtake, they will divide the spoil, their lust shall be satisfied upon them,

(a) Ver. 14, 15, 16;

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they will draw out the sword, their hand shall destroy them. The old Serpent was a murderer from the beginning, and endeavours to shape men into the same form with himself; and infuse into them the same principles of malice and cruelty, that act him in all his designs against the souls of men: Hence it is, the *blood-thirsty hate the upright* (a), and that with a *cruel hatred*, as *David's enemies hated him* (b). To such a degree is their malice carryed that *the tender mercies of the wicked, are cruel* (c). The very natural compassion in them as men is lost; and what would have pass'd for compassion is cruel. Such is their rage, they would root out the very foundation of *Israel*, and not suffer their name to be had in remembrance. Well may we therefore make *David's prayer*, a part of our own, *Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men* (d).

Inf. 2. These cruel blood-thirsty enemies, are oftentimes nearest to destruction, when they are most elevated with hopes of success. *Pharaoh* thought himself sure of the prey, and is confident of the victory; *Israel* cryed out, They were undone, and gave themselves up for a lost people; and then was God just bringing on the destruction of the one, and the salvation of the other. *Then thou didst blow with thy wind, and the sea covered them. Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.* Many times men are most insolent and haughty before their destruction, when the faith of God's people has been the lowest, their deliverance has been at the door; for at evening-time it shall be light; and when the confidence of his enemies have been at the highest, their ruin has been just at hand. This makes their ruin the

(a) Psal. 29. 10.
Psal. 59. 2.

(b) Psal. 25. 19.

(c) Isa. 12. 10.

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more remarkable in itself; most glorious to the author of it, and most grievous to the subjects of it; for the higher their confidence, the greater the disappointment; and the greater the disappointment, the greater the vexation.

Inf. 3. God's designs are oft-times very remote from the apprehensions both of his people and their enemies, which afterwards he makes appear to the greater confusion of the one, and comfort of the other. When God brings his people into toils, he is but laying a snare for their enemies. *Israel* at this time was brought into the utmost streights, and this by the direction of God himself; *Speak to the children of Israel that they turn, and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and Baalzephon* (a). *Pharaoh* hereupon concludes he has them fast, they are caught in a net, entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in, now they are ensnared, and there's no escape. The *Israelites* cry out of this conduct, as that which at once throws them into the mouth of their enemies, and puts them beyond the possibility of an escape. So it seemed to them both at first; but God's real intentions were very different from the apprehensions of either of them; what he was doing they knew not yet, but should know hereafter; the event would soon interpret the providence, and unfold the riddle. God feeds the pride and malice of *Pharaoh* by this method, to ripen him for ruin. This makes him the more secure and resolute; it hardened his heart, and pushed him on to his own destruction. What he thought was a snare to *Israel*, was only a trap for himself. God laid an ambush against him, and when the time comes for him to work, rises up out of his place, and surprizes him with destruction, where he expected nothing but success.

(a) *Exod.* 14. 1, 3.

And who knows but God may have suffer'd those things to fall out here at home, which have created that uneasiness and discontent which is so visible in the minds of men; that have alienated so many to such a degree from the very government itself, and rais'd such unhappy feuds and contentions among ourselves, to make our enemies the more secure and confident; and tempt them to some daring enterprize, judging that a favourable opportunity to put it in execution, when men are thus chafed in their minds; though in the end it may be turn'd to their own confusion; and God may get himself honour on them, as he did on *Pharaoh*.

Inf. 4. God delights to humble the proud, and takes a pleasure in abasing those, that exalt themselves. *Pharaoh* that impiously declared he knew not the Lord, nor would he obey his voice to let Israel go (a); shall be forc'd at last by repeated plagues to answer the Summons. Proud *Pharaoh* that boasted with such insolence he would not let them go, and when he had let them go, that he wou'd recover his prey, and either destroy or repossess them, without asking God's leave, He shall be made to know there's a God in the heavens that ruleth over all, and wherein he deals the most proudly he will be above him. God is tender of his honour in this point, and usually frustrates proud men, that conceive unlimited purposes, and boast how they will execute them, without any thought of those bounds which he prescribes them. He stands upon his honour and loves to attack those that equal themselves with him. He looks upon these proud men and abases them with the utmost degree of contempt, as he did *Pharaoh* and all his grandees; they lye heaps upon heaps, as dung upon the face of the earth;

(a) Exod. 5. 2.

so that the beasts and birds of prey are called upon to eat the flesh of captains and mighty men. Now God got himself honour in humbling this proud dust and ashes, that thus exalted itself against him. This is *Pharaoh* and all his multitude ! Come see the man that defied himself ; defied his maker, and was the terror of his people ; he is gone down to the pit ; and lies buried in the deep as a perpetual monument of God's justice. *For he has purpos'd in himself to stain the pride of all glory, and bring into contempt the honourable of the earth (a).* When *Rabshekah*, in the most insolent and daring language blasphemed the living God ; *exalted his voice and lifted up his eye, against the holy one of Israel*, boasting that he wou'd do to *Jerusalem*, as he had done to other Cities, then God puts a hook into his nose and a bridle into his lips, and in one night smote an hundred fourscore and five thousand of his men (b). When *Herod* receives the title of a god, given him by the acclamations of a flattering people, in an instant he is made a banquet for worms. Let God alone to deal with proud men ; he takes that work into his own hands and will do it effectually.

Inf. 5. God oftentimes pays his enemies in their own coin, and the same measure they mete to others, he measures to them again. *Pharaoh* had given commandment to kill all the sons of the *Israelites* as soon as born ; and this not taking effect, he gives express orders to all his people, to cast every son that is born into the river, and drown him (c), and now the righteous God pays him home in his own kind. He revenged upon the *Egyptians* the blood of those innocents, whom they had drowned ; *Pharaoh* and all his host are drowned in the sea. God throws off all tenderness ; they would shew no mercy, and shall find none : His bowels are silent ; the sum is

(a) *Isa.* 23. 9. (b) *Isa.* 37. 23, 29, 36. (c) *Exod.* 1. 16, 22.

now repaid with interest and recompenc'd double, men for children, full grown *Egyptians* for new born *Israelites*; and herein the Lord is righteous.

Such acts of justice will God shew in the final destruction of *Babylon*. Her sins, its said, reach'd up to heaven, and God remembred her iniquity; and gives out a commission to the executioners of his wrath to this effect, *Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double; according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double (a)*. For this retaliation they give glory to God, saying, *Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast thus judged: For they have shed the blood of the saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy: They thirst for blood, and made themselves drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (b)*. Then give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. *Nec lex est justior ulla.—Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments (c)*.

Inf. 6. God can destroy his enemies and deliver his people, with the greatest ease. It is no pain to him to rout a whole host of *Egyptians* in an instant. He did but blow with his wind and the sea cover'd them at once. The enemy boasted what he would do; *I will pursue, I will overtake*: They talk big; and without God it's all but talk; but God can as easily act as resolve, and do as say. He does but breathe; he does but look, and they are undone. He darts out beams of life and death from his eyes. He looks upon his people, and comforts them; he look'd upon the *Egyptians*, and troubled them (d). He saves his people, as he created the world, by a word; for he commands deliverances for them. He does but speak, and it is done. He distresses his enemies by a look. He looked the *Egyptian* host into

(a) Rev. 18. 5, 6.

(b) Rev. 17. 6.

(c) Rev. 16. 7.

(d) Exod. 14. 24.

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disorder, and their chariot-wheels out of motion. The breath of his mouth, a look with his eye, is all that's needful to destroy the most powerful enemies he has in the world.

Inf. 7. God loves to manifest this power in delivering his people when they are brought into the greatest extremities. He delights to be seen in the mount, at the grave, to have his way in the sea, and his path in deep waters. Mercy is never so sweet as when it is seasonable, and never so seasonable as in the very turning critical point. *Israel's* destruction seem'd inevitable before Heaven stirr'd for their relief. They had a raging sea before them, a more raging enemy behind them, they themselves were disarm'd, and seem'd to lie wholly at the mercy of their enemies, then did God blow with his wind. These streights of the church, are their enemies hopes, but God's opportunities: *For in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* It's no rare thing to see deliverances usher'd in by some amazing distress.

He then *that sits in the heavens shall laugh at his enemies, the Lord shall have them in derision; when they take counsel together against him and his anointed, he knows they imagine a vain thing.* Such a plot we are sure there is; but let who will be in this plot, great men, statesmen, politicians; let what will be the alliance, how deep and strong soever the confederacy, he knows it's all a vain attempt. He is in the heavens and overlooks all they do, they never dig so deep as to hide a design from the sight of his eye; nor enter into a conspiracy so strong that it can't be broke by the power of his arm.

Such discoveries God has made, such deliverances he has wrought for us, and hitherto tho' the enemy would pursue, he has not suffered 'em to overtake; but stop'd 'em in their course, taken off their chariot-wheels, and caused them to drive

drive heavily on. He blows with his wind, and blasts all their projects. So that they *conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web.* Their webbs have not yet become garments; neither have they covered themselves with their works. They have sown the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. The pit they digged for others, they are fallen into themselves. The wicked are snared in the works of their own hands. *Higgaion Selah (a).* This is not a thing to be laughed at, but to be carefully observed and meditated upon. Its true, many make a jest of these things; its no wonder they do so, whose interest it is to have us believe nothing of their designs till they have given the blow, that shall effectually convince us, but when it is too late. Let not us then joyn in the common cry, and make a jest of our enemies plots. It can sure be no body's interest to do so, but theirs that either are in the design, or well-wishers to it, and would gladly have it succeed. If our enemies can persuade us to make a jest of their plots, I am afraid they'l at last make a jest of us. There's reason to apprehend the late design was more deeply laid than we are aware of; when things are laid together and considered one with another we may come to understand the meaning of what before we took little notice of, and conclude, that those many insolent and daring ballads sung about our streets, reflecting in the most scandalous manner upon the King and government. That those treasonable and seditious libels every day spawned among us, were not meerly for the sake of a little profit; but intended to prepare the minds of ignorant people for what men of design were contriving against us; and that the rude mobbs hired and excited to raise tumults and ri-

(a) Psal. 9. 16.

ots, were only some light horse sent out to skirmish in order to bring on the main battle : and that the word put into their mouths, which became so general a cry throughout the nation, like that of *Edom* in the day of *Jerusalem*, *raze it, raze it, down with it, down with it, to the ground*, was but a part of this plot, or a *Preludium* to the execution of it.

And there are three things it may not be improper a little to consider upon this occasion.

First, What might at this time more especially give our enemies encouragement to enter into fresh designs against us, and contrive our ruin. And in the general, that uneasiness and discontent, those murmurings and complaints every where seen and heard were things doubtless that might prompt them hereunto, as what gave them a fair handle, and of which they hoped to make their advantage. There happened a strange concurrence of circumstances to occasion these discontents. Among others one was the sudden loss of mens estates, and the ruin thereby of so many families; the diminution of our public credit, and trade, through the wicked management of a fatal scheme. Under such circumstances as these, men are apt to speak and act very unlike themselves; to lay the reins in the neck of their passions, and break out into undecent reflections upon others, rather than smite upon their own breasts, and ask what they have done. The foolishness of man perverts his way, and when he meets with disappointments in it, his heart frets against the Lord. This they might easily perceive had wrought according to their hearts desire and created in the minds of many, not a bare indifferency towards the government, but to our reproach, too great a disaffection to it, and prepared men for any thing that would gratify their revenge.

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Another thing, that occasioned our discontents, and gave a handle to our enemies; was the *Quarantain-act*. This perhaps was not so well considered as it ought; but on the other hand was far from being a just cause of all that clamour which was then rais'd against the government. Things were too much aggravated and carried much farther than became us; our enemies had their end in it, and were not a little pleased to hear all the frightful stories told in conversation, and from the pulpit, to work upon the passions of the people. This also wrought as the enemy would have it, who when men were thus chafed in their minds and exasperated against the real or supposed authors of their mischief, struck in with the humour, as favourable to their designs, and what they hoped to find their account in. To which we may add as almost a natural consequence of this, That we were crumbled into parties, unhappily divided among ourselves, and ready to devour one another; grown cold to our former friends, and ready to throw ourselves into other hands. Of this also they doubtless expected to make their advantage, well knowing the use of their own maxim, *Divide & Impera*. They that bite and devour one another, will be an easy prey to those that wou'd devour them all.

Another thing to be considered is,

Secondly, What might at this time administer occasion to our fears; and fill us with apprehensions of danger. And one of the first things, that presents itself hereupon to the thoughts of every serious enquirer must be,

The abounding of iniquity in the midst of us. Our aggravated sins and provocations; gross impiety and prophaneness, and an almost universal corruption of manners in the land. Our monstrous ingratitude to God and man; abuse of the great-

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est mercies ; and ill returns for all former appearances. That wretched disposition in many to return into *Egypt* ; the very spirit of this people, who for that reason, never entered the promised land but their carcases fell in the wilderness.

Another thing that may give us the alarm, is, our woful degeneracy from the faith of the gospel. The vast spread of impious principles that strike at the foundation of religion ; the contempt poured on divine mysteries ; despite done to the Son and Spirit of God, &c.

To all which we may add, the great decay of real piety among us. The love of many waxes cold. Religion languishes and is even ready to expire. Our backslidings are as visible and apparent as they are gross and provoking. We have lost our primitive zeal ; left our first love ; have a name to live but are dead. Keep up somewhat of the form of godliness, whilst the power of it is denied, &c. And are not all these things, sufficient to fill our minds with the most fearful apprehensions ? May not we expect God should ask, *shall I not visit for these things ? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?* May not we justly fear those things at length will arm the Almighty's hand against us, and provoke him to send down some dreadful judgment upon us ?

But at the same time, we are to consider,

Thirdly, What may give ground to our hopes. And,

One thing is the very instance before us : what God did for this people. Many of them at this very time, were quarrelling with *Moses* for bringing them out of *Egypt* ; which was in effect to fly in the face of God himself (a).

(a) *Exod.* 14. 11, 12.

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Because they are embarrass'd, and pressed with some difficulties at present, they despise all their mercies, express a sordid contempt of liberty, and prefer a servile bondage before it: and yet for this murmuring, unthankful, unbelieving people, did God work so great a salvation.

We may also take encouragement from the many good and kind things God has done for us already. Had he been minded to have destroyed us, and at last to give us into the hands of our enemies, *sure he would not have shewed us such things as these (a).*

Another thing from which we may also take some encouragement, is, the very rage and insolence of our enemies. *Israel was a nation void of counsel, nor had they, says God, any understanding in them; justice demands their destruction; their sins deserved it, and God seems to have determined it; I said I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men.* But mercy prevails for the sparing them; and from this consideration, *I feared the wrath of the enemy, that their adversaries would behave themselves strangely, and say, our hand is high, the Lord has not done this (b).* Had it not been for this, provoking Israel had never shared in so many deliverances. We are then sometimes more beholden to our enemies insolence, than our own innocence. That there is amongst us also a far greater number of righteous men than would have saved the cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*; a praying people that humble themselves for their own sins, sigh and cry for the abominations of others, would stand in the gap, and make up the hedge; is what gives us some hope. But above all, God's own name, his interest and glory, is what we are to have our expectations

(a) Judges 13. 23.

(b) Deut. 32. 26, 27, 28.

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from. For this he has wrought hitherto, and tho' we had nothing else, this is still left us to hope in. They that tremble for the ark of God and his *Israel*, may comfort themselves with this : God will not suffer his holy name to be polluted. And since for the sake of this we are at present escaped from a late dangerous design, I would recommend to you these three things.

1. Let God have our praise. *The enemy said, I will pursue.* They said 't within themselves, to one another, to their confidants at home, to their confederates abroad ; now is the time, this is the opportunity. Such vain hopes as these they have fed themselves with, from time to time, ever since the Revolution. Now they will repossess us ; at this time they shall certainly overtake us : but hitherto have they been disappointed : God has wrought for his own name, and let him have the glory : he that is the author of our deliverance, should be the object of our praise.

2. Let our enemies have our pity. Our religion teaches us, not to *render evil for evil ; nor railing for railing ;* but contrariwise, to *do good to them that hate us, to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us.* 'Tis not their personal ruin, but their repentance and reformation we should rejoyce to see ; that they may at length be convinced of their mistakes, and see their error ; that they have been fighting against God ; and are enemies to themselves and their country, and may therefore lay aside their mistaken principles, and return to that loyalty and obedience they owe to our rightful sovereign, and know their own happiness under so mild a government. Though if they continue obstinate and implacable, we are no less concerned to pray against their designs ; that we may'nt be enslaved and brought under popish superstition and bondage ; but delivered out of their
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hands whose tender-mercies we shall be fure to find cruel.

3. Let the King and government have their due. *The things that are Cæsar's*, our Saviour has commanded his disciples to *render unto Cæsar*. Our consciences are none of *Cæsar's* things; 'tis God's prerogative alone to make laws that shall bind them, and these must be rendered to God *as the things that are God's*. But notwithstanding this the christian religion, is no enemy to civil government; on the contrary, it tells us, *We must be subject, not only for wrath but conscience sake. It is written, speak not evil of the ruler of thy people; curse not the king, no, not in thy thought*. Not that great men are not to hear of their faults; or public grievances are not to be complained of by proper persons in a decent manner, but we are forbid to despise dominions and speak evil of dignities. Let us then, render to the King as supreme and magistrates under him, what is their due, according to the laws of God, and the laws of our country. Let the King have our hearts and hands; our inward reverence, and outward assistance; murmurings do us no kindness, only encrease our burdens, and bind them the faster upon us. Let the King also have our prayers; these the apostle exhorts to be made for all men; and *particularly for kings, and all in authority* (a). Others load him with their curses, let us assist him with our prayers, that his person may be under a divine protection; and his counsels under a divine conduct. That his life may be prolonged; his throne established, that the crown may flourish on his head, and his enemies be cloathed with shame; that under him we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, and that there may not be

(a) 1 Tim. 11. 1, 2.

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wanting one of his illustrious family to fill the throne, while sun and moon endures.

I shall now conclude, with observing but these two things.

1. That this deliverance was wrought and is recorded for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages. This destruction of *Pharaoh* was *Israel's* food to subsist on in all their marches to *Canaan*. *Thou breakest the head of Leviathan, and gavest him to be meat for the people inhabiting the wilderness* (a). This, one would think should for ever stop the mouth of unbelief and despair, and silence all their fears. What is it after this God cannot do, and what is it we may hope he will not do for his people? Let us therefore hence learn to hope and trust in him in the greatest distresses. And,

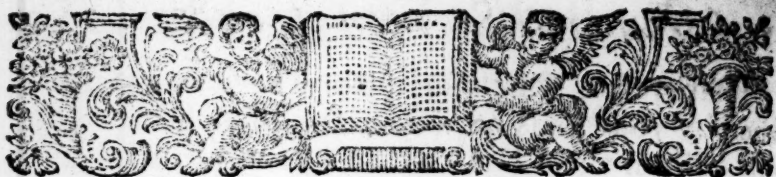
2. That this song of *Moses* was typical of the gospel triumphs of the church over all her enemies, and therefore we should learn from hence to give glory to the Lamb for all the deliverances wrought by him. For that on the cross by his blood from the reign of sin; and for what he works on the throne by his power from all our outward enemies; and especially the man of sin. The church's song of triumph for Christ's victory over that enemy is called the song of *Moses* and the Lamb (b). The song of *Moses* was a type of theirs, and had an eye to this particular time, wherein they had a like occasion of praise that *Moses* had. And it is observable, that the words which in this song of *Moses* are rendered in the present tense, are all in the future, on purpose, it may be, to tell us, that it did not only look backward, to what God had done; but forward to something extraordinary which he should hereafter do for his church and people, and that this was

(a) Psal. 74. 14. (b) Rev. 15. 3, 4.

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composed and calculated for after-times, that it might be a pattern of celebrating some greater action; and particularly the pouring forth these plagues upon the antichristian world; between which there's a manifest parallel, and the Holy Ghost therefore makes a comparison; *Israel* stood by and pass'd through the *Red-sea*; they that got the victory over the beast, stood on a sea of glass. There were timbrels made use of in the song of *Moses*; and these had harps in their hands. The same God that then did blow with his wind, so that they sank like lead in the mighty waters, consumes the man of sin by the spirit or breath of his mouth: For this victory of *Moses*, they sing, *Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?* And for this glorious conquest of the Lamb, they sing, (in which let us all joyn with heart and tongue) *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy?*





A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the
F U N E R A L

of the REVEREND

Mr. JEREMIAH SMITH;

Who departed this Life, *August* 20, 1723.

I P E T. V. 4.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a Crown of glory that fadeth not away.



HIS, my friends, is to us a day of humbling and rebuke. Light afflictions speak; greater ones amaze: may our spirits be suited to the providence, and the sadness of our countenances be a means to better our hearts. We are called, if God will help us, to improve the death of that excellent man, who was for you a faithful minister of Christ.

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A Funeral Sermon for, &c. 185

That vessel, which held the precious treasure, whereby your souls have oft-times been enriched, is now broken; alas! it was an earthen one, as all are, into which God puts the heavenly treasure. This therefore is not to be wondred at, as if some strange thing had happen'd, considering man's mortal frame, even at his best estate; and that this vessel had already lasted almost seventy years. Ministers under the gospel are no more suffered to continue, by reason of death, than the priests were under the law: they must die as others do, in their several generations, that they may rest from their labours, and receive their reward. It is what every one knows, though not what every one lays to heart; I pretend to tell you no news, in saying no man's piety, no man's usefulness, any more than any man's greatness, will exempt him from the stroke of death. *Your fathers, where are they? The prophets themselves, do they live for ever?* You of this congregation know they do not, having had several eminent, and faithful ministers, who once watched for your souls, buried out of your sight (a). But though this is not a thing to be wondred at, there are some circumstances attending the providence, which render it more than commonly afflictive to us.

As to himself indeed, a good man, a faithful minister, is prepared to meet the last enemy, in any shape whatsoever; at all times, and in all places, either at home, or abroad, where-ever the messenger meets him, he obeys the summons with an holy resignation of soul, and dies like *Moses*, at the commandment of the Lord, let it be when, and where, or how, and in what manner he pleases, who is the Lord of our lives, and has our times in his hands. The Father of our spirits may call for them at his pleasure, and his servants resign them at that

(a) *Mr. Howe, Mr. Spademan, Mr. Rosewell, and now Mr. Smith.*
call.

call. But as to us, there is something in the circumstances of this death, which does not a little aggravate the affliction; as that it seized him so suddenly when abroad on a journey, at a distance from many of his friends, and at a time when we flattered our selves, God had answered our prayers, and would spare this valuable life yet a little longer; he being so far recovered as to be able to go abroad several times; and finding his strength so much restored, designed a return home, which was a thing he seemed very much to desire: when on the morning of the day fixed for his intended journey, a violent convulsion seized him at once, and in less than half an hour, put an end to all his thoughts; without his being able to speak one word to those about him: so that he, who left his habitation, as we often do ours, with hopes of seeing it again, never visits it more; and instead of returning to his house, is gone to his long home; and we had our last sight of him, when we little suspected it, and must now see his face no more at all. This is our affliction! Here is the cause of our grief! So it is to all of us; but especially to his surviving Relatives; among whom the distressed widow may take up *Naomi's* words, in part at least, and say, *The Lord hath testified against me, the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me; I went out full, full of joy and comfort, full of hopes, with the dear comfort of my life; but the Lord hath brought me home empty; I went out with a living, but came home with a dead husband; call me Mara; that is a name most agreeable to my present circumstances; for God hath dealt bitterly with me, and I am now a woman of a sorrowful spirit.*

May our Lord God, even our Father, comfort your hearts under this sore stroke. This work is the Lord's, he takes it upon himself, *I, even I, am he that comforteth thee.* But he puts it upon his servants, and commands them, saying, *comfort ye, com-*
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fort ye my people, speak ye comfortably to them. But where-wit'hal, and how shall we comfort you? what shall I suggest, that may alleviate your grief? what lenitive shall we bring to assuage your sorrow; I could think of no more likely, or more effectual way, (if God would make it evident to our faith,) to quiet your minds, under this afflicting providence, than to turn your thoughts to that happiness, the faithful are immediately possessed of upon their departure hence. Our loss indeed is great, very great; but their gain is vastly greater. *They enter into peace, they rest in their beds, each one walking in their uprightness.* Could we follow them by the eye of our faith into the other world, and look within the veil to see the glorious crowns they wear, the shining robes wherewith they are arrayed, whilst we are clad in mourning; could we lay our ears to the heavenly musick, and hear the divine consort; the hallelujahs, the shouts, the songs of joy and triumph, wherewith the heaven of heavens resounds; whilst we hang our harps upon the willows, and find our hearts out of tune, for *Zion's* songs: could we see where and what they are, know how it is with them, what they are doing, how they are employed; and in one word, what glorious creatures they are, we should even be transported with the thoughts of their blessedness, and only long to be sharers with them in their joys. Come then, my friends, let us comfort our selves with these things! with those words, which God has put into our mouths by the hands of his servant *Peter*, who tells us, *When the chief Shepherd shall appear, all his faithful ministers shall receive a crown of life, that fadeth not away.*

Before I come directly to consider the words, I would observe to you, that though the life of every true christian is justly represented in the sacred writings as a spiritual warfare; yet this character
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is much more applicable, and with still greater propriety, belongs to gospel ministers: since they are not only obliged to contend with those enemies, that militate directly against themselves, and hazard their own salvation; but, as overseers of the flock, they are called to watch over the souls of others, and so are under a double obligation; first, from the law of nature, to be examples to others in saving themselves, and then from the law of their office, to be instruments in saving others. They have all the difficulties of private christians; they are themselves compassed with the infirmities others complain of, and subject to the same passions, by which others are too often overcome: they have their own corruptions to mortify; their own peculiar temptations to resist: they have, in a word, all that to do for themselves, which any other persons have; and besides all this, they watch for the souls of others, the care of the flock is upon them, they are set for the defence of the gospel, &c. So that if christians, above other men, then ministers, above other christians, are engaged in a spiritual warfare: And as the sphere of their motion is larger, their work greater and more difficult, the opposition they meet with more fierce and violent; on their part it calls for greater capacities, a more eminent degree of strength, courage, and resolution; and consequently they need more than ordinary encouragement from God: And hence it is, we still find peculiar promises made to these, of God's gracious presence and assistance here, and assurance given them of a more ample and abundant recompence hereafter, that their encouragements might bear a proportion to their work and service. The schoolmen speak, in their way, of three *aureolas*, as an additional accession to the essential happiness of saints in the other world; and one of them they assign

assign to the teachers of the church. And some ground there seems to be for this from what the scriptures speak of a *Prophet's* reward, as exceeding that of a righteous man; and the intimations they give us, that they who are so far honoured as to be instruments in turning others to righteousness shall shine with a brighter glory, and wear a heavier crown than others. This encouragement the apostle *Peter*, in particular, gives his fellow elders to faithfulness in their office, that *when the chief Shepherd shall appear*, they, above others, *shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away*. Having premised this, I proceed to observe to you, that there are two things the apostle does in the beginning of this chapter.

First, He exhorts the spiritual guides to a faithful discharge of those duties, which, by virtue of their office, they were obliged to perform; and this he does in the three first verses. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, feed the flock of God, &c.* and then,

Secondly, He enforces this exhortation by the strongest and most powerful motive, in the words of the text; *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, &c.* which words contain in them the substance of all our hopes, as they tell us the season when we shall enjoy them to the full. *q. d.* 'The work I have set before you is attended with its peculiar difficulties; it requires painful diligence and industry; it is a work of the greatest importance to the honour of God and the souls of men: but take courage, my dear brethren and fellow elders; doubt not to encounter these difficulties; fear not to venture upon the work; never sink beneath the weight of your burden; be not weary and faint in your minds, but be of good heart. Ply the oar; grudge no pains; assure your selves, your labour shall not be in vain

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‘vain, it shall not altogether want success at pre-
 ‘sent, and if you are faithful, be assured, you shall
 ‘not miss of a full reward hereafter; for *when the*
 ‘*chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown*
 ‘*of glory, that fadeth not away.* This is honour e-
 ‘nough! more than amends for our (at the best
 ‘but) poor services.

The opening and improving these words will na-
 turally lead us to endeavour the three following
 particulars.

- I. To represent to you, the reward it self here
 promised, which is, *a crown of glory that fa-*
deeth not away.
- II. To shew you, the time when this glorious
 reward shall be received, and that is, *when*
the chief Shepherd shall appear; and,
- III. To consider, who the persons are that shall
 be partakers of all this glory; and they are
 more especially, tho’ not only, those guides
 and overseers, that faithfully observe the fore-
 going direction, *ye shall receive, &c.*

We are then,

I. To represent to you, the reward it self here
 promised; and this is no other than what the apo-
 stle had told them, v. 1. he himself hoped to be
 a partaker of. *Who am an elder, and a witness of*
the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory
that shall be revealed. Whatever his pretended suc-
 cessors do aim at, it never entred into his heart
 that the office of an elder would ever advance him
 to some of the greatest honours and preferments
 of this world. He never sought great things for
 himself, nor expected to partake of them; all that
 he hoped for was to be a partaker of that eternal
 glory which now lay very much hid, but would
 be revealed at the coming of Christ. And what
 he

he aimed at himself he recommends to others, being careful to take off their minds from the mean poor views of filthy lucre and worldly advantages. Those things he removes out of their sight, and calls off their eyes from gazing on a worldly lure; he teaches them to trample on sordid gain, and despise the world's pompous vanities. He once told a man, that expected an alms rather than a cure, *silver and gold have I none*; and now that he is giving directions to his fellow elders, he expressly cautions them against aiming at filthy lucre, tho' his pretended successors have, by degrees, raised themselves till they come to rival kings, and equal the princes of the earth in wealth and power: with what regard to the apostolical canon, let any one judge! So different was the spirit and behaviour of the apostle *Peter* from that of his pretended successors, such strangers are they, and so unlike to one another, one must conclude, sure they can never be a-kin, how much soever they boast of being lineally descended from him. Did he make the elders of his day, or those that should succeed himself, or them, any promises; did he give them any expectation of a tripple crown, large patrimonies, a power over the kingdoms, estates, bodies and consciences of men; so far from it, when he comes to inforce his exhortation upon them, he carefully guards against any such pretension, and teaches them to pass by with an holy scorn, all the pitiful pageantry of this perishing life, and despise those trifles that enchant a carnal heart. But having removed these things out of their sight, he takes care to substitute in their room what is infinitely more to their advantage, and worthy of their ambition; which is, no less than a crown of *glory, that fadeth not away*. And this he gives them the promise of, not to make them mercenary and servile,

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servile, but hearty and chearful in their master's work. The reward then is,

A crown, *a crown of glory!* and *a crown of glory that fadeth not away.* To make our future and invisible state more intelligible to us, the scriptures, we see, describe it by sensible representations; it being hard for us, whilst our souls are cloathed with flesh, to conceive of heavenly things but by images taken from material and earthly objects; the blessed, therefore, are often described, as in a kingdom, on a throne, with crowns on their heads, &c. Here is,

First, A crown; a big word, and what sounds great in the ears of men; the promised reward is so called to denote,

1. The dignity and excellency of that state to which the blessed are advanced in the other world, and the honour God there puts upon his faithful servants. It is his pleasure to give them a kingdom, and raise them to royal dignity. It is so called also to denote,

2. The amplitude and fulness of the heavenly glory. A crown, by reason of its figure, compasses the head on every side, so the souls of the faithful are surrounded with celestial glory. The whole man, each faculty of the soul, and, at length, every member of the body, entirely shares in this happiness. There is a *fulness of joy at God's right hand*; there the blessed are filled with all the love and delight in God their souls can hold. The divine goodness is fully manifested to them, his glory put upon them, and the whole man made perfectly blessed. It is also so called,

3. To intimate to us, that this is a prize, and given after striving and conquest. It is called the *prize of our high calling* (a). If we expect to receive

(a) Phil. 3. 14.

it, we must run, strive, wrestle for it, and that lawfully, with diligence and success; no man else can hope to be crowned.

Farther, this is said to be,

Secondly, A crown of glory. The captain of our salvation was contented once to wear a crown of thorns, as if he had been a mock prince, but has purchased and prepared for his followers a crown of glory, having made them real, tho' spiritual kings unto God. This denotes the splendor and brightness of the heavenly state, in which we change all our troubles here below for those joys that are above; that wondrous bliss which heaven reserves in store, which heaven, and only heaven can give us.

That day is all high noon; one continued, perfect sunshine without a single cloud to overcast the light; there souls shine with the brightness of the sun in the firmament, swim in an ocean of pleasure, bathe themselves with unconceiveable delight in those rivers that run at God's right hand, and sun themselves for ever in the light of his countenance. There is no night at all, they need no candle, neither the light of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; the Lord God himself gives them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever. Here is the vision, and fruition of infinite truth and goodness, to satisfy both the understanding and will. Then comes the blessed hour, when we weep no more, and live for ever: in that dear place, none of those things that here give us so much trouble, are once known; age, sickness, pain, want, sorrow, sin. Then descending angels crowd the air, and wait to convey the souls of the faithful to the place, where crowns of glory are prepared to reward them.

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If it be asked, But how long shall this continue? The answer to that leads us to a farther commendation of this crown, which is

Thirdly, That it fades not away. This doubles the joy, and still adds to the contentment. The pleasures of that state are as lasting, as they are full: these are for evermore; whereas all things here are only for a season: the pleasures of sin, riches and honours, the crowns and kingdoms of this world, all but for a season. The garlands that crowned the victors in the Olympick games, well known at *Corinth*, being made of boughs, and leaves of trees, and flowers, soon withered and faded away; *they run for a corruptible crown (a)*. Yea, earthly crowns, made of gold and precious stones, things much more durable and lasting in their own nature, yet together with all things else, have this mortifying epithet, corruptible! These perish and decay, like those that wear them: time eats up and devours them all. But we strive, says the apostle, *for an incorruptible crown*, such as was never worn by any here on earth; being only made, and fit for heaven. The wreaths and laurels of this crown are, and will be, as fresh to eternity, after millions of ages, as at the first moment the crown was set on our heads. The happiness of that state is immortal, which adds an infinite weight to their glory; the security of their joy, redoubles the sweetness of it. It is a massy crown, a weight of glory, but none are ever weary of wearing it; its weight does not make it a burden. Fear not being palled by long enjoyment, in heaven all things are new. The spring of our joys never dries up, nor will the heavenly manna ever grow out of taste, though we never rise from the festival table; the presence of God will never cloy us, nor shall we

(a) 1 Cor. 9. 24.

ever be weary of beholding the face of our glorified Redeemer. The sun of nature never fails to enlighten and refresh the earth, and shall not the brightness of God's face, the glory of the sun of righteousness, much more give us fresh and pleasing entertainments? Here the beatifick object is clearly revealed, and for ever enjoyed, the contemplation of it constant and uninterrupted; for we always see, love, rejoyce in, and serve the blessed God.

Briefly, the state is always fresh and flourishing, without decay in it self, or dislike to us: It is an inheritance incorruptible, an immarcessible crown, a glory that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us; and there to be received from the hand of God, as a largess of divine bounty; a gift of his mere grace and mercy; since, *when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants*; and it becomes us, as the four and twenty elders do, to cast our crowns before the throne of God (a), saying, *worthy art thou not we, to receive glory, and honour, and power*. They owe all their grace, and all their glory, to him and his grace; whatever they are in time, and hope to be to eternity, all this they are by the grace of God; to him they owe all their victories, and crowns; all their honours and advancement. This then is the reward here promised. And these are no vain speculations; no fabulous romantick descriptions of groves and fields, rills and streams; no fictions, and dreams of pleasure and happiness, but the true sayings of God; and only require our faith to be more strongly exercised about them. Indeed, the reality of this blessedness does infinitely exceed all these faint resemblances, and is rather lessened by comparisons taken from earthly things; for there is no com-

(a) Rev. 4. 10.

parison between them. Had any man the tongue, as well as the understanding, of an angel; and could he write down his descriptions, with a pen taken from the wing of a flying cherubim, it will be confessed, when we come to taste those pleasures, and behold this glory, one half was not told us.

If it be asked, But when shall all this be received? the satisfying that enquiry, will lead us to the next general head, which is,

II. To shew, the time when this crown of glory shall be received; and that is, *when the chief Shepherd shall appear*; that is Christ Jesus, who is here called a Shepherd: the chief Shepherd, who will, its supposed, at length appear; and when he does so, the faithful shall then receive their crown. This tells us,

First, That Christ is a Shepherd. Under this title and character, he is often promised, prophesied, spoken of, and represented to us in scripture; he is, it's true the *Lamb of God*, and yet the *Shepherd of the sheep*; in which there is not the least inconsistency. In his death he was *the Lamb of God*, as he laid down his life to purchase the flock; in his resurrection, he is *the Shepherd of the sheep*, as he received and employs his life to feed the flock. This contains in it the several offices of the great Mediator, which are the foundation of all the blessings we expect and receive from God, and of all the prayers and praises we offer up unto him. And there is hardly any relation, that gives us a clearer idea of his love, tenderness, and affection to his people; his care of them, his compassion towards them, watchfulness over them, his diligence and faithfulness to provide for, and secure them. But he is also called,

Secondly, The *chief Shepherd*. Sometimes he is spoken of as

The

The good Shepherd (a), he knows his sheep, takes care of them, nay, he lays down his life for them. In this indeed he appears to be a good Shepherd; this is an instance of goodness, without a parallel; we have no words sufficient to express it, nor is there an example to illustrate it; such goodness, till then, was never heard of, nor ever will. He is also called,

The great Shepherd: *The God of peace, that brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep, &c* (b). Others may be Shepherds, and in their measure good Shepherds, but none of them are that Shepherd, that great Shepherd. John was a burning and shining light, but he was not that light. Jesus is that great Shepherd of the sheep; so he is in his person, his Flock, his service, care and charge.

He is great in his person, for he is the great God. So the apostle styles him (c), *Looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour.*

This appearance is expressly ascribed in the text to the chief Shepherd, and can be applied in this place to no other than the Son, in whom these two are happily united, the Saviour and the God. He is the great Shepherd, for he is the great God. These two characters meeting in one person, fully secure our happiness, and make up all our comfort. In all his glory, he stoops to be a Saviour; and all the things he does as a Saviour, are the acts of a God. God was manifested in the flesh: God laid down his life, and purchased the church with his blood, &c. How happy is the conjunction then, when such power and love, greatness and goodness, meet together in the same person? He is not too great to undertake our salvation,

(a) John 10. 11.

(b) Heb. 13. 20, 21.

(c) Tit. 2. 13.

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for he is the good Shepherd ; nor too feeble to accomplish and effect it, for he is the great God. He is great also,

In his flock. That is all his own, given to him; and purchased by him; and this, tho' comparatively a little flock, yet absolutely, and in it self considered, is vastly large; so great, that no man can number it. This flock consists of all the chosen of God, from the beginning of the world, to the end of time. All the faithful that have been in former ages, and are now dispersed up and down, and scattered over the face of the earth, they are all his flock; which lead us to observe once more, he is great.

In his care and charge, in the work and service he performs; for he buys and purchases this flock, he gathers it and feeds it; he has the oversight of the whole, they are all committed to his care, and made his charge: he prescribes laws and gives rules to them; he provides food for them, and grants them his protection; and finally saves them, to a single person: he sees to it, and takes care that not one of them be lost: in all this he is faithful to his trust, and saves them to the uttermost. Now if these things will make a person great, then is Christ *the great Shepherd of the sheep*. But the title given him in the text, is that, of

The chief Shepherd. Than which nothing could be more pertinent to the apostle's design, who here speaks of the church as a flock, and of ministers as overseers of this flock, whose work it is to feed it. He lets us know then, that the best and highest of these, even those, that by reason of their more exalted and enlarged capacities for the holy office, are raised much above their brethren, and far excel them in learning, knowledge and understanding, gifts and graces, and may justly be called *burning and shining lights*; that these are all but under shepherds to Christ the chief Shepherd. He is

is infinitely superior to them all : From him they receive their office and commission ; it is in his name, and by his authority, they act, and to him at last they are accountable for all they have had, and done. For (which is the next thing to be considered)

Thirdly, This chief Shepherd will at length appear.

This is here supposed, and taken for granted. *He once appeared in the end of the world, or in the last of the ages, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself, and once offered himself to bear the sins of many (a), And to them that look for him, will he appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation : what this appearing is, and when it shall be ; how long he will stay when he comes, and what he will do, are things we know but little of : only in the general, whenever it is, we are sure it will be a glorious appearance. And whereas before, he came in an humbled state, and in the form of a servant, he will come again in a glorious manner, with all the pomp and splendour of a King ; in the glory of his holy angels, in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father.*

And as this will be the manner of his appearing, since he comes as the chief Shepherd ; it is natural to suppose, that the end of it, among other things, will be to take an account of all his under-shepherds, and ministers ; how they have discharged their office ; to know of them what they did with his sheep ; what care they took of his flock ; whether they watched over it, and fed it, or only fed themselves ; what compassion they had on them, under all their wants and weaknesses ; whether they strengthened the diseased ; healed that which was sick ; bound up that which was broken ; brought again that which was driven away, and sought that which was lost.

(a) Heb. 9. 26, 27.

These are things will come under a strict enquiry, in the day of Christ's appearance. And,

Fourthly, Then it is, that his faithful servants shall receive the crown of glory; which by no means supposes, that no part of their blessedness shall be received, till Christ's second coming; but only tells us, that is the time, when their enjoyment of it shall be compleat; and then the reward shall be fully and finally dispensed: but immediately upon their finishing the work given them to do, tho' their blessedness be not absolutely, and in all degrees compleat, yet then the crown laid up for them, shall be set upon their heads. Having thus represented to you, the reward itself, and shewn you the time when it shall be received; I come in the last place,

III. To shew who are the persons that shall be partakers of all this glory. Every one at last would be catching at this glorious crown, even those that now trample upon, and despise it; that laugh at it, and make a jest on't; as what in their thoughts, bears no proportion to the *Mammon* of unrighteousness; and who therefore, like him that is reported to have said, he had rather have his part in *Paris*, than in *Paradise*, look only at present things and seen; even these, when their eyes are opened, and themselves entring upon the unseen world, would then gladly take their part in all this blessedness. But hands off, profane sinners, and ungodly wretches! Every ones claim to this crown, won't be allowed in the last day. They that share in this blessedness, are such, as fight the good fight of faith; endure temptation, are faithful to the death; look for, and love the appearing of Jesus Christ. All such, and only such, shall receive this crown of glory. But the words of the text, considered in their reference to the foregoing, lead us, as the present occasion does, to apply this promise,

mise, more especially to faithful ministers. Ye shall receive the crown of glory, you elders that have had the oversight of the flock, and performed the duty of your office; you shall receive this glorious reward. From hence I shall give you their character in three things.

First, They are such as were called to the office and work of overseers: that had the inspection of others, and the souls of men committed to their care. An important trust! esteemed so by all that are sensible of the worth of souls, and consider the account that must be given of them to God: but this is not all, they have not only the office, and the name, but,

Secondly, They that receive the crown, are such as act the part of overseers; do indeed answer their name, and perform the work of their office, they feed the flock; a name that is pregnant with notions of spiritual care, duty, and benignity, and comprehends the whole work of faithful ministers; a work of a vast compass, and like the commandments of God, exceeding broad. They that obtain this reward, are truly overseers, do the work of a bishop, or inspector. That don't fleece the flock, follow their own pleasures, and prole after worldly honours and preferments, but feed the flock; endeavour to know its state, see what they need, and give them their meat in due season; observe how they walk, and guide them with strict discipline; they instruct, counsel, admonish and comfort, as there is occasion; such they are, in a word, as naturally care for the souls of men, and give full proof of their ministry.

And then all this they do, not as driven to it by mere necessity, *not by constraint, but willingly*,
(a). They don't perform this work as a task,

(a) 1 Pet. 5: 2.

nor bear it as a burden, which they would gladly get rid of, if they knew how to subsist without it; but do it with a willing mind, from the pleasure they take in the work, the compassion they bear to the souls of men, the zeal they have for the Redeemer's interest in the world, and as those that do account it their greatest honour, to be any way serviceable to promote it; whose joy and crown it would be to win souls, and *turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.*

And this they do also, not as drawn to it by the prospects of worldly advantage: *not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind (a).*

Nor is this done by them with a lordly spirit, exercising a tyrannical power over others: *neither as being lords over God's heritage (b).* The flock is God's patrimony, a people fallen to him, as it were by inheritance, his clergy or lot, and therefore, others are not to lord it over them: their power is utterly exclusive of all rigid authority, being given them for edification, not for destruction; they are to be helpers of their joy, and not lords of their faith.

Thirdly, They that receive this crown of glory, are such as were examples to others: *neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock (c).* As those that teach the art of writing, set types, and copies, before their scholars, by which they may form their letters; so the life of every minister should be a copy for others to write after. Life oratory is most suasive, and speaks with the greatest evidence: This shews men, that the rules of religion are practicable, since they themselves are enabled to reduce them to practice. These should go before others in the exer-

(a) 1 Pet. 5. 2. (b) Ver. 3. (c) Ver. 3.

cise of all those graces and duties they recommend to them in their doctrines, and be examples to the flock in conversation, in spirit in faith, in purity; being patterns of meekness and humility, patience and self-denial; of soberness and gravity, peaceableness of spirit and behaviour. This is, indeed, to be guides to the flock, when we don't only call them to their duty, but go before them in it ourselves; and are not, like statues, or hands set up in the road, to direct travellers to a place, towards which they never take one step themselves, but are guides to shew them the way, and go along with them, and before them our selves. Thus ought ministers to shine as lights in their walk, as well as in the pulpit; else in the midst of a man's best performances, others will be apt to remember his personal irregularities. We find men are disposed to believe one that shews he believes himself, and appears to be in good earnest in all that he says; whereas he that gives his own doctrine the lye, cannot fairly expect another should give it credit. He certainly talks with an ill grace, against those sins and vices in the pulpit, which he patronizes, and gives countenance to in his life; *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self?* If a man makes a jest of his own office, and talks of it with froth and levity, he must expect others will make a jest of that, and him too. An unblemished life gives a man great boldness of speech; when he loses his authority, whose words and discourses are destroyed by his works and actions. These things prostitute his office, and forfeit all regard to his instructions: these are the things, that expose both his person and function to contempt; for no bodies crimes excite greater abhorrence and detestation in the minds of men, than theirs, who are devoted to the altar. How happy is it both
for

for themselves and others, when ministers, to all those convincing arguments, by which they prove the truth and excellency of our holy faith, add plain and sensible demonstrations; and let the world see in themselves what sort of a man a christian is? Happy this would be for others, since such as these shine as lights for their guidance in a dark place, and are most likely to edify them; and no less happy for themselves, in the satisfaction it gives them at present: *For this is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and much more to youwards (a);* and then in the prospect and assurance it gives them of a glorious recompense hereafter; with this the apostle *Paul* comforted himself, living and dying, when he was ready to be offered up, and the time of his departure was at hand; having *fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith*; he had the satisfaction in himself, *that henceforth a crown of righteousness was laid up for him, and should be given him by God, the righteous judge*: and with this it is, the apostle *Peter* encourages those, to whom he gives the foregoing exhortations, *that when the chief Shepherd did appear they should receive the crown of glory which fadeth not away, that had conscientiously observed the foregoing rules.*

A P P L I C A T I O N.

And are these the persons, that shall receive the crown of glory, when the chief Shepherd shall appear; then may we not comfort our selves with this thought, that he whose death we now lament, is in the actual possession of all this glory? We would

(a) 2 Cor. 1. 12.

not of course cry up every one of our departed friends and brethren as a non-such, and run out into an excess of praise and commendation ; as if every star that sets must needs be of the first magnitude : but I believe I have your assent to this, who knew him best ; that the forementioned characters of those, who shall receive this crown of glory, were as truly exemplified in him, and did as much belong to him, as to most men. You are witnesses, so long as God lent you this loan, how exactly his doctrine and life tallied with these apostolical rules ; and need not that any should testify.

Now this consideration has a double aspect ; when we consider what he was, it calls upon us to mourn, for what we have lost, and to rejoyce, in what he has gained ; the more exactly he answered these characters, the more aggravated is our loss, but then the more enhanced is his glory ; mourn then we should, for what we have lost : sorrow is here allowed us, under due restrictions. A Stoical senselessness at such a time is so far from being christian, it is not human. Nature must have its way, and be a little indulged to express its sensible pain at the loss of what was dear and valuable ; tears in such a case are the debt we owe to love. Nature demands them, and grace don't altogether forbid them ; who can but drop a tear then, upon this mournful occasion, and sigh forth an *Ab my brother, my father, my father ! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*. We are all this day called to lamentation and woe, ministers, elder and younger ; these have lost a friend, a brother, a father. The congregation, this has lost a faithful, skilful guide and pastor ; and the family sure must take a deep share in this day's sorrows ; one having lost an affectionate husband, and others a tender and indulgent parent : oh then
that

that our heads were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep for our loss. It will appear great, very great, how light soever some may make it, if we consider what he was. The doing so much justice to his memory, as to say what Mr. *Smith* was, is a province, I acknowledge my self very unfit for, and therefore wished and desired the service might have been put into some other hand, every way fitter to perform it; but since it is forced upon me, I shall endeavour, as I can, to do some justice to the memory of so good, so great a man, by giving you my own real apprehensions and thoughts of him, as persuaded you will readily concur with me in the truth of them.

It was my unhappiness to have but a late particular acquaintance with him; I call it so, because all that I did know of him, made me wish I had known him sooner and better; I own, I was always pleased with his conversation, and instructed by it, and must think, in him we have lost a very valuable person: whether we consider him,

As a Minister, and so in a publick capacity. As such, I think it may be justly said,

He was a considerable scholar: God had given him great natural endowments, which were not suffered to rust by sloth and idleness, but well cultivated and improved by close application, and severe study: by which means he had acquired a large stock of useful learning, a great fund of necessary knowledge, and an eminency in ministerial abilities; having a large compass of thought, great strength of mind, a clear head, and a solid judgment. As a minister also,

He was one that *kept the faith himself*. St. Paul reckoned this among his glories; as an *Apostle*, and a *christian I have kept the faith*. This was his honour and comfort, of whom we now speak; he
kept

kept the faith, he contended for it; he bore his testimony to it in an hour of temptation. He had both a zeal and a capacity for its defence. If I ever observed his warm, it was in his Master's cause, where he judged the honour of his Lord concerned, which ought to be dearer to us than our lives; where zeal is a commendable virtue, and indifferency criminal in the sight of God; and was there not a cause, in a day when the most pernicious and destructive errors, so highly derogatory to the Redeemer's glory, abound amongst us? but then this zeal was of the right stamp; conducted with great prudence and discretion, and tempered with no less meekness of spirit and charity, without rancour and bitterness. His zeal, like our Lord's, did eat up himself, not consume others. He was for no fire from heaven, but that of the spirit of judgment, and burning to enlighten mens minds, and lead them into all truth, and purge us from the dross of errors and corruptions. His zeal was for the safety and preservation of truth, without any design, or desire to injure mens persons, to hurt them in their names, reputation, and usefulness. His behaviour was no ways unseemly towards those that had not altogether the same sentiments with himself, as to the open avowing their faith, at the time, and in the way, he thought fit to do it, so far as ever I could observe; and I have had opportunities of knowing him pretty well on that head. He still went on, contending for the truth, in a way, and with a spirit, most likely to secure and promote it; which should be the aim of every honest man, and good minister; since the contrary spirit serves only to harden others in their dangerous errors, and prejudice their minds against the truth. Moreover,

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The faith which he kept he preached, being desirous, that the *truth of the gospel might continue with you*. He did indeed act the part of an overseer; and, like a good Shepherd, watched over, and fed the flock; this he did with great skilfulness and integrity, for he fed them, as they were able to bear, with sincere milk, and strong meat, with wholesome food, fit to nourish the souls of men: In *doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned (a)*. It appeared by his productions, he did not offer that to the Lord or his people which cost him nothing; this was evident to all that heard and read them, or would understand them. His compositions were all elaborate, smelt somewhat of the lamp; which, as I have been told by his nearest relative, often burned till after midnight in his study. And being thus laboured, it's no wonder there was nothing in them mean and spiritless; that they were so full of excellent matter, and good sense; so exact for their method and order; composed and drawn up in such an easy natural style, with a just propriety of language. He never affected a swell of phrases (where you may have a torrent of words, with a drought of sense) to gain himself the name of a profound speculative preacher; nor a quaintness of words, to be commended for a fine orator; nor did he make a shew of his own scholarship to get the name of a learned preacher. His endeavour was in a manly, though easy address to instruct men's minds, and warm their hearts; being careful so to temper things, that his thoughts might not sink, nor his style swell.

He studied to bring down difficult things, and high in themselves, to common reach. It was not his business to make plain things dark and unintelligible, (the greatest solœcism in preaching) but

(a) Tit. 2. 7, 8.

dark things, and hard to be understood, plain and easy; not to obscure a text, and throw a shade over it by some far-fetch'd and uncouth interpretation to amuse people, but to cast a light upon it by a natural and easy unfolding of it; all which shewed the rich mine whence this precious treasure was fetched.

In a word, his performances were such as would stand the test of the most judicious part of an audience, [which, it must be owned, is not always the greatest; and for want of a fine delivery, some, more taken with sound than substance, might not discern their worth, nor give them their deserved esteem.

To conclude this head: As a minister,

He was truly an example to the flock; his conversation being of a piece with his doctrine; one of a holy humble spirit, mild and peaceable in his temper; handsome and ornamental in his carriage and behaviour, and in a word, a pattern of good works. He did nothing to stain his character, but many things to adorn it. His life being not barely free from blemishes, which is a low size of commendation, but shined in all the parts of it, whereby he kept up the majesty of his office: But then,

Our loss will farther appear, if we consider what he was as a christian in his private capacity; and here it's plain his natural and moral qualifications were sanctified by divine grace. This shewed it self in his domestick relations, his friendships and whole commerce with the world.

With what a perfect heart he walked before God in his house; how careful he was to serve the Lord himself, and that his house might do so too; how good in every relation, as an husband, father and master, let them tell that composed the family, I need not.

In his friendships, as a minister and acquaintance he was lovely and amiable; though of a superior judgment to many, not imperious and assuming in his temper, or ready to dictate to any. His carriage towards other ministers was very exemplary and recommending. He was not envious at others greater success or respect, but rejoiced in their increase. He shewed much of this temper in his carriage towards that young minister (*a*), lately chosen to assist him in the work of preaching, to whom he was a friend and a father, affectionate and kind, still enquiring after his progress and increase, as one that wished and would rejoice in his success and encouragement.

His whole commerce in life also shewed he knew the world, had studied men, and was well acquainted with human nature; that he had conversed with people of character, as indeed he had some friends that were persons of honour and distinction; so that in short it may be said of him, he was a gentleman, a scholar, a christian and a good minister; to whom we may apply that of *Demetrius*, he had a good report of all men, and of the truth itself. 'This is the man, the pious, the holy, the excellent man we have lost. This is the light that is now put out, and shines no more; and how much of heaven leaves our world when such as he are removed out of it?

But it is more than time to turn the stream into another channel, and try to divert our sorrow by considering those things that tend to alleviate it.

His multiplied years are matter of thankfulness, God having, as was said at first, drawn out the thread of life near to the common stage, and continued him to the last, in a serviceable state; being able, almost to the very last Lord's-day he lived, to do

a) Mr. Bures.

something in his Master's work, which was so much his delight; wherein God gave him his wish, which was, that he might never outlive his capacity for service, nor be laid aside from his work, till he should be laid in his grave.

And as a farther alleviation of our sorrow, having in such a manner fulfilled his ministry, and finished his course, we have reason to believe, he has now received the crown; and therefore while we mourn for our loss, we may rejoice in his gain.

He, blessed soul! being now entred into rest, got out of a vain, sinful, ensnaring, troublesome, contentious world, far from the rage of men, and the strife of tongues, to the realms of light and love, holiness, peace and joy. Oh! the crowns, the robes they wear, the harps they hold, the songs they sing in the upper world! If *free among the dead*, they are joined to the *Spirits of just men made perfect*, to sin and sorrow no more. Blessed saint! all tears are now wiped from his eyes, and therefore let not too many be seen in yours: with these things let us comfort one another under this heavy stroke.

Let the children do things worthy of such a parent; choose their father's God, and imitate their father's virtues. The fair prospect of this hitherto is matter of great thankfulness. Go on then in the ways of holiness, and persevere therein to the end. Sad would it be, should the children of ministers, the sons of so many prayers, of such an education perish at last; but we hope better things, though we thus speak.

And as for you of this congregation, suffer me to say, you have sustained a heavy loss. It is a long time before persons are formed to so much knowledge, capacity and experience as he was that is now taken from you. Be sensible therefore of your loss; lay it to heart; remember and keep in mind

the things you have heard, and approve your selves as becomes those that have been under the inspection of such eminent guides, and been taught beyond many. Continue in your zeal for religion; abound therein more and more, and in your love to one another, and unity among your selves. Stand fast in the spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and when your *Elijahs* are translated to heaven, be earnest with God for a double portion of his spirit, that some *Elisba* may rise up in their room, and you may yet be a flourishing people.

This then is the use we may make of such a promise, with respect to him that has finished his course; but there is also some use to be made of it with respect to our selves, that yet remain in the conflict, both as ministers and Christians.

I would then take the opportunity and freedom from hence, to make the following use of it, to my self and brethren in the work of the ministry. Is there such a glorious recompence set before us; such a crown of righteousness laid up for us? then,

1. *Exh.* Let this fortify our minds against all the ill usage we do, and must expect to meet with from others. A man that will be faithful to Christ, is like to find but coarse entertainment in the world: They that burn in zeal for God, must look for fiery trials from men: to have their piety reproached as hypocrisy, and themselves reviled as the troublers of *Israel*: their persons, and office, loaded with disgrace and contempt; despised, laughed at, and made a jest of; but having such a promise as this, we may well say, as the apostle, *none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to me, that I may finish my course with joy, and at length receive the crown of glory.* This may comfort us, against all the disgrace of malevolent spirits, and
evil

evil tongues; the little flirts of some, and the cruel mockings of others; what are all these, to the glory that will be revealed, *when the chief Shepherd shall appear*? If we reckon right, it will be as the apostle did, *That the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed* (a). Were our faith duly exercised on this glorious recompence, it would more than answer all the extremities, that sense could urge upon us; one broad sight of the celestial glory, a full look at the things within the veil, would enable us to bear the greatest difficulties, with patience, and wade thro' the deepest waters, even seas of trouble without fear. Stephen hardned himself against a shower of stones, not indeed so hard as their hearts that threw them, when he *looked stedfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God* (b). Let us then oppose the glory of our hopes to all the abasement of our sufferings; let this balance all the ignominy and reproach cast upon us; let us take courage and lift up our heads, we serve a God, that will make us more than amends, for all we do and suffer for his sake; then despise the shame now put upon us, since God designs us all this honour. Endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; *blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life*.

2. *Exh.* Let this encourage and excite us to a faithful discharge of all the duties, belonging to our office. Are these the persons, and these only, that shall receive the crown of glory; that thus carefully feed the flock, what will become of many in the day, *when the chief Shepherd shall appear*? If only faithful labourers shall be crowned, where will

(a) Rom. 8, 18.

(b) Acts 7. 55.

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the loiterers appear, when Christ shall do so ? those that took the oversight of the flock from mere necessity ; that aimed at nothing, but filthy lucre ; never fed the flock, but fleeced it ; that exercised a lordly dominion over their persons, when they should have been helpers of their joy ; that were examples to the flock in nothing but what was scandalous and reproachful ? should we not tremble, to think where these will appear ! and look to it, we are not of this unhappy number ; see that we feed the flock, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; not as being lords over God's heritage, but examples to the flock ; *and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory.* Here is the noblest work, and the highest motive ; a serious belief of this would draw forth all our active powers into the service of God. Here is room for our highest ambition ; the God whom we serve, is able to reward us, and intends for us a happiness that cannot be conceived ; what encouragement then is here to faithfulness, diligence, and perseverance in our work ? Let this carry us upwards, as on eagles wings, and help us to soar on high, as birds of paradise. See what's before you, palms, white robes, crowns and kingdoms, shouts, and songs of praise to our great Creator and Redeemer. Let nothing seem hard that he requires ; grudge no pains in his service ; only let us be faithful, and fulfil our ministry ; that our enemies may not reproach us, as having lost the sobriety, and sanctimony of our forefathers, whereby they so much recommended themselves to the world ; and that we are now generally grown as remiss and vain, as others : this you know has been said, and very sad it would be, if it's truly said, and cannot be refuted. Upon this, some
have

have built their hopes, that our interest cannot stand long, but must necessarily fall for want of proper hands to support it.

Let this animate us in our work, lest our friends also complain, that we have lost the spirit of our forefathers, that we are not like their old ministers, upon whose labours we are entred: we don't preach, nor pray; we dont live nor converse, or appear like them; so far as this is true let us lay it to heart, and enquire what we have done, to lose the reputation those gained, that went before us; and take care not to sink our character, but preserve or recover the majesty and authority of our office.

Thus encouraged, let us not be slothful in business, but followers of them, who through faith and patience now inherit this promise. Oh let us be faithful, be faithful! that is what is laid upon us; be faithful unto death, faithful to God that has called us to our charge and trust, to the souls of men; for faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it.

Finally, what has been said to some, may be applied to all; for this crown of righteousness is laid up, not only for such as *Paul*, and other faithful ministers; but for all those that love and look for the appearing of Jesus Christ. These have their course to finish, their race to run; their difficulties and trials to encounter with; and their rewards for their encouragement; let us all then be up and doing, whatever our hands find to be done; *and do it with all our might; since there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither we also are hastning. Let us work, while it is day, the night comes, wherein no man can work; work for God, for the Redeemer, work for souls, for our own souls, and the souls of others; let us*

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not faint and be weary in our minds, in due time we shall reap if we faint not. *Be stedfast then, my brethren, and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, having an assurance, our labour shall be so far from being in vain, That when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away.*



SER.



A
S E R M O N

OCCASIONED by the

D E A T H

Of the R E V E R E N D

Mr. JOHN FOXON;

Who departed this Life

OCTOBER 26, 1723.

J O H N xix. 30.

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.



T is common for us, when any of our pious and christian friends, are removed out of our world, to enquire how they left it? what the frame of their spirit was in some of their last moments? how they met the messengers of death, and received the summons to go up and dye? what support and comfort they had in the darksome valley from the rod and staff of a
graci-

gracious God? thus solicitous we often are to know their end. And the Psalmist gives countenance to such enquiries, when he calls upon us to mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; take particular notice of him, observe what comes of him, and you shall find *the end of that man is peace.* Balaam himself, though a pitiful forcerer, was so well appriz'd of this, that whoever he lived like, he makes it his request (though it was a vain wish, as theirs ever must be, that separate between the means and the end) *Let me dye the death of the righteous, and my last end be like his.* This is the man that hath hope in his death, and peace at his end. But we are more especially desirous to know how our deceased ministers went off the stage. Many eyes are upon them, to observe how they liv'd, and see how they died: it's expected they should be examples to us in both. It was therefore the request of an excellent minister in his day, that *he might not dye meanly, but so, as therein to bring much glory to God.* That he might dye comfortably, chearfully, triumphantly, as becomes a christian and a minister. An heathen has taught us, that one part of dying well is to dye willingly. *Benè mori est libenter mori.*

It's a blessed thing then, and comfortable, to have it said of christians and ministers they died well, and went off the stage with honour. These all died in faith. Their end was peace. They had hope in their death, and feared no evil, for God was with them to strengthen and comfort them in their last agonies. They acquiesc'd in his will, and went off resign'd; chearfully left all, their country, their father's house, their own houses, their kindred, their friends and their flocks, to go unto that land which God would shew them, as what he had beforehand prepared for them.

And we are still much more concerned to know, what was the end of a far greater, and infinitely
more

more important life; what was the issue of our Redeemer's combat with the powers of darkness: what were the inward workings and discussions of his holy soul, when giving up himself to the greatest and most hazardous encounter, that ever was, or could be engaged in: what he said, and how he acted in that great adventure. And for our satisfaction herein, the evangelists, who were so careful to transmit the history of his life to after-ages, have also given us a particular account of his death. From them we learn, among other things, that he spent the night before his sufferings in prayer, and conflicts, with strong cries and many tears: that for a while he seemed at a stand, when he said, *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass*; but soon recovered himself, *nevertheless not my will, but thine be done*; which one calls Christ's *Motto*.

And, when he came actually to dye, some of his last things were his prayer for his enemies, *Father, forgive them*; his promise to the converted thief, *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*: that heart-rending cry, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and then the triumphant shout in the text, *it's finished*: after which we are also told he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*; and having said this, he spoke no more, but *bowed his head and gave up the ghost*. Happy conclusion of an humbled life, and an accursed death! he went off the stage in triumph, and died in a way as honourable to himself, as it was comfortable to us.—

I shall sum up this account of him in the following general observation, *viz.*

That our blessed Saviour having finished all the things that concerned him here, with an holy confidence commended himself into the Father's hands; and having thus secured his spirit, freely resigned his breath, and let go his life. This contains in it the following particulars,

I. That

- I. That our Lord Jesus finished all the things that concerned him here.
- II. That having so done, he commended his spirit into his Father's hands.
- III. That having taken this care of his spirit, he did freely let go his life. After handling each of these, I shall endeavour
- IV. To bring these things home to our selves, in a suitable and proper improvement. Here then we are to shew,

I. That our blessed Saviour finished whatever concerned him here. He was indeed a workman that needed not to be ashamed. Never was such a work undertaken; nor ever was any work so well performed. Nothing was left undone which he covenanted to do; nothing done by halves, nor left unfinished, which he took in hand. The piercing eye of justice itself could not espy the least blemish or flaw in the whole performance. This he avouched with his last breath; and openly proclaimed before all the world, when he said, *it is finished! it's all done to a tittle!*

This is a single word in the original; but this one word contains in it the very sum and substance of all our hopes and comfort. A remarkable word, and much to be taken notice of, as the words of dying men, especially their last words, commonly are. These are the last words of *David*, the man rais'd up on high, says the sacred historian, on which he puts a special remark, as what were worthy to be remembred; but these are some of the last words of a greater than *David*, says the Evangelist, which we ought therefore the more carefully to attend unto. For this end, I shall endeavour to shew what was finished; and then consider the consequences and effects thereof, which will be as so many evidences of it,

First,

First, Then we are to enquire what was finished at our Lord's death. To which I answer, all that related to the great atonement; whatever God had decreed, the prophets had foretold, and the ancient rites had typified concerning the death and sacrifice of Christ; whatever God required, the surety undertook, and the sinner needed; all that was necessary to his own humiliation, his Father's glory, and his people's happiness.

All the old Testament prophecies, that pointed directly at the Messiah's sufferings, were punctually accomplished in his death.

The ceremoniāl institutions, the Jewish laws and sacrifices being all perfected, were finished and made an end of, as of no farther use or significancy in the worship of God.

The counsel and commandment of the Father, concerning the Redeemer's sufferings; the whole project and design of eternal love in our recovery was then brought to an head. This mystery is finished in the sacrifice of Christ. Here it effectually takes place and is come to an issue.

His conflict with all his enemies is now drawing to an end. It is said by the evangelist, how much soever his enemies were enraged against him, and therefore sought to take him, that some way or other they might put him to death, no man laid hands on him; the reason of which was this, his hour was not yet come. But in a bosom discourse between himself and his Father, where he is most open and free, he says, *Father, the hour is come* (a). That critical and important hour upon the issue of which so much depends. Such an hour as never came since time began. This hour is now come: the set time for my suffering. The

(a) John 17. 1.

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trumpet sounds to the battle, I am now to enter the lists, not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers; with men and devils; with sin, death, wrath, the curse and hell. Now is the decisive battle to be fought. The hour is come. And here in the words of the text, when giving up the ghost, he says, Father, the hour is finished. It is at an end. The battle is over, and it's well over. I have won the field, the day is my own. My enemies are routed. Sin, Satan, and death have gone their length, and done their worst, they are all overcome and conquered. Death is disarmed and unstung; the devil subdued and destroyed. Principalities and powers spoiled, triumphed over and made a shew of; openly exposed to publick contempt; and become a spectacle to angels and men; the fight was sore, but the issue glorious and honourable. It is finished! into this triumphant word he formed his last breath. This is the voice of a conqueror, that sees the glorious issue of his combat, in the entire defeat of his enemies.

But what I could choose to fasten upon as the main sense, is,

That all the work given him to do was now finished. So he himself explains it, in those words, *Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do* (a). Not that the whole work of redemption was then actually compleated. He was yet alive; had the pangs of death still to go through; he was now struggling with the powers of darkness, for the deliverance of man. He must actually be offered up for our offences; and raised again for our justification: after which he was to ascend to the Father, and intercede with him for his people; re-

(a) John 17. 4.

turn in his spirit and kingdom; manifest his gospel to the world, and, in the end, judge it. These great and important parts of his work remained still to be done.

But whereas the offering himself on the cross, was the chief work in our redemption, and in which lay his greatest humiliation; and this was just finishing; he had already got the better of the day, and was confident he should carry it through; therefore he thus cried before the work was totally compleated, it is finished; it is as good as done; and will very soon be so. All that related to the great atonement, whatever was to be done or suffered here on earth in order to expiation, and impetration; every thing which belonged to that great sacrifice whereby the church was to be perfected, is now accomplished. I have finished all the work thou gavest me to do. Here observe,

That Jesus Christ, as Mediator, was the Father's servant. So the prophet calls him; *behold my servant whom I uphold* (a).

As a servant, it is easy and natural to suppose he must have work to do.

This work must be determined by him, whose servant he is. So much our Saviour himself tells us, when he calls that his work, *which the Father had given him to do* (b). The will of God is the foundation of our salvation. The will of his purpose and counsel; the will of his command and precept. This determines his work, and governs him in all he does, as he himself acknowledges in those various expressions, all of the like import. *Lo, I come to do thy will; I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is in my heart. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.*

(a) Isa. 42. 1.

(b) John 17. 4.

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This work the Redeemer finished. *By one offering he hath for ever perfected all them that are sanctified (a).* He hath fulfilled the law and made that honourable; finished transgression and made an end of sin. He hath satisfied divine justice, and made reconciliation for iniquity; brought in an everlasting righteousness, and thereby obtained all needful blessings. Whatever the law demanded is paid; whatever the sinner wanted is purchased. Every thing that justice required and the surety undertook; whatever was necessary to our perfect state here, and compleat happiness hereafter; to our present acceptance with God, and future enjoyment of him; it is all done and finished.

A great word! if we consider the nature of that work given him to do; and yet not to be wondered at, if we consider who it was that undertook it, who, and when it was he said it.

If we attend to the nature of the work, we shall find it to be of the greatest difficulty, and of the utmost importance. In it self, it was a work of the greatest difficulty: so great, so glorious, that it might well be ask'd, who in heaven or earth was worthy of it, and equal to it? is preaching to men, so hard a work, that the great apostle asks concerning it, who is sufficient for these things? what then must redeeming them be? dying for them? making an atonement for them, and giving satisfaction to God for them? who is sufficient for these things? God himself therefore asks with wonder and pleasure, *who is this that hath engaged his heart to approach unto me (b),* as a surety for man? who is he that has courage to undertake it, or strength to manage it? no man on earth, no angel in heaven, durst attempt it, or was fit to undertake it. None of these could give to God a ransom. None

(a) Heb. 10. 14.

(b) Jer. 30. 21.

of these were sufficient to satisfy offended justice; to expiate sin and guilt; to finish transgression; and make an end of sin; to fulfil the whole law; to destroy the works of the devil; to spoil and disarm sin, Satan, death, the grave and hell; to remove the fatal curse, and obtain all needful blessings. All the creatures in heaven and earth, with their united strength were unable to stand under this burden, or once lift it from the earth; who indeed is sufficient for these things!

And as the work was difficult, it was painful. A work, that drew from him, not only sighs and tears, but blood. Painful work! as appears by the torments he endured in his body; the agonies he felt in his soul; his earnest request to his Father, that if possible, the cup, so large, so deep, so bitter, might pass.

The greatness of this word, *it is finished*, will farther appear when we consider, that this was a work of the utmost importance and necessity; of the greatest importance to the honour of God, and the happiness of his people.

To the honour of God; particularly his truth and faithfulness, having foreordain'd and foretold it; of his justice and holiness, which required and called for it; of his law, that had been violated, and must be fulfilled.

And a work this was of no less importance and necessity to the happiness of mankind: for what had become of the whole race of fallen *Adam*, had not this work been undertaken and performed? for ought appears, we must have been ruined and undone to a man. If justice had not been satisfied for us, it must have satisfied it self upon us. Had not the precepts of the law been fulfilled in his obedience, and the penalty of it answered by his sufferings, we must have died according to its righteous sentence. If he had not finished trans-

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gression,

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gression, and made an end of sin, that would have made an end of us, and for ever finished all our hopes of happiness. Had not death and the devil been subdued by him, these would for ever have triumphed over us, and carried us as their spoils to the infernal prison; sin, in a word, had been the death of us, had not he been the death of sin.

To hear him then saying of a work so difficult in it self, so important unto us, *it is finished*, is a glorious sound, honourable to himself and no less happy for us.

But as great a word as this is, it is not to be wonder'd at, considering the person that spoke it, and the circumstances he was under when he said it. It is the voice, not of a meer man, but indeed of a God. The eternal Son of the eternal Father. A divine infinite person. The Father's fellow; God's equal. The subject suffering was the human nature; but the person suffering was the Son of God; one that infinitely exceeded the quality of the offending persons, and equalled the dignity of the person offended.

And then, as to his personal character, he was absolutely holy and harmless, separate from sinners, as it became him to be, and us to have: one that needed not, like other priests, to offer first for his own sin, and then for the sins of the people; for had he in himself been a criminal, he could not have been a Saviour. He then that offered was God: that which he offered was himself, his whole human nature; and this without spot to God. Here's then a perfect being, upon which follows a perfect working. How was it possible, any thing could miscarry that is put into such hands? if he condescends to undertake the work, we are sure to see a good issue of it. There is nothing he begins, which he is not well able to finish. What is it
such

such a sacrifice, offered up by such a person, is not sufficient to accomplish? do we see Jesus, the eternal Son of God; the Father's delight; the angels wonder and admiration, not sitting on a throne, and shining in robes of majesty; but now humbling himself to death, even the death of the cross; nailed to the cursed tree; bleeding and dying there; pouring out his soul unto death, and making himself an offering for sin? it is no wonder then to hear him say, *it is finished*. So marvellous a condescension must needs produce such glorious effects. Having shewed what was finished, we now come to consider,

Secondly, The consequences and effects thereof, which are so many evidences of it.

1. Having paid the debt he is discharged. This naturally follows upon it. Though it was necessary he should dye, it was not possible he should be held under the power of death. And therefore he has nothing to do after this, but to rise and ascend, He is no longer in the grave; his flesh rests in hope of a joyful and speedy resurrection: *thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades*, the state of other human spirits, separate from my body; thou wilt not suffer me to continue long in the grave; nor let thy holy one, obedient in all things, and that has fulfilled all thy will, to see corruption; but having fully paid the debt, justice itself will sign the order for his discharge, and accordingly did so, *for the God of peace brought him again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant*. This is both an effect and evidence of his having finished the work given him to do.

2. Having done his work he is rewarded. This is also a natural consequence; he is not barely discharged, but advanced. Having finished his day's work, it is but just he should be paid his wages.

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wages. He has won the field, let him then seize the prey, and take the spoil. It is fit he should reap the fruit of all his hard labour and sufferings; and this he does,

1. In his personal glory. This he expects and insists upon. His flesh did not only rest in hope, that he should not see corruption, and soon be taken out of the grave; but that God would shew him the path of life, and receive him up into glory. This he insists on himself in those remarkable words, *I have glorified thee on the earth, and finished the work thou gavest me to do, and now, Father, glorify me with that glory I had with thee before the world began (a). After he had offered one sacrifice for sin, he for ever sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, henceforth expecting his foes to be his footstool (b).* And according to his expectation, God raised him from the dead, and gave him glory. *He hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.* He that had been the despising of men, and the reproach of the people, now has all power in heaven and earth put into his hands. He was no longer in the grave, and now he says, I am no longer in the world. I came forth from the Father, and having done all that was given me to do here, I go to the Father. The time of his humiliation, and the days of his abode in flesh are now at an end. He ascends into the highest heavens, to take possession of all the glory designed for him. He is also rewarded,

2. With a numerous offspring. Having made his soul an offering for sin, he is recompensed with great success in the affairs of his kingdom; and powerfully applies the fruits of his purchase to the souls of his people. He sees of the travel of his

(a) John 17. 4.

(b) Heb. 12. 13.

soul, and reaps the fruit of all his hard labour, in a numerous, illustrious, hopeful shew of converts, that come flocking to him, like doves to their windows: the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hand: he has the dew of his youth from the womb of the morning. Numerous converts like drops of the dew in a summer's morning. This was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame (a). This lay in his resurrection from the dead, his reception into heaven, and the salvation of his people.

This will be matter of the songs and triumphs of saints and angels through eternal ages. At the hearing this word, *it is finished*, let the heavens and the earth resound with the loudest shouts and hallelujahs to the mighty conqueror. Salvation to our God that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb in the midst of the throne. We congratulate thee on the greatness of thy undertaking; and the glory of its success. Eternal thanks we owe thee! everlasting praises we give thee! Hallelujah! I come now to the next general head.

II. Having thus finished his work, with an holy confidence he commends his spirit into the Father's hands. This we gather from the account given us of these things by another evangelist, who tells us, when *he had cried with a loud voice, viz. it is finished*, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit* (b). These were the last of his dying words, in which God uttered his voice in such a manner, and after such a rate, that the earth trembled and shook. The son of *David* made use of his father *David's* expression, and died with scripture words in his mouth (c). His spirit was upon the very point of separation, and instantly

(a) Heb. 12. 2.

(b) Luke 23. 46.

(c) Psal. 31. 5.

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departing, he therefore commends it to his Father's care and keeping. Which he did,

First, For himself as a dying person. And a wonderful transaction it was. Into his hands others commend their spirits, so did the apostle *Paul* while living (a). So did *Stephen* when dying; *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit* (b). And here he himself commends his own spirit into the Father's hands. This was an act full of faith and comfort. It shewed his faith, for he had no doubt but the Father would receive his spirit; take the charge and care of it, and effectually secure it. He addresses himself therefore to him under the title of Father. When he complained of his being forsaken, he cries, *Eli, Eli, my God, my God*; when he is commending his spirit, it is, *Father*. And well may a son, and such a Son, commit any concerns, how dear and precious soever, into the Father's hand; as he does his spirit, with a full assurance, he would both receive and return it. And in this also he took the greatest comfort. *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices* (c). His tongue breaks out into holy boasting and praises. He leaves his obedient soul as a precious treasure to his Father's custody and tuition, with a full satisfaction in what he had done, knowing he had trusted it with one that would not fail to secure it, that in a little time it should return, and be reunited to his body, never to part again. In confidence of this, he commends his surviving spirit into the Father's hands, when he was just giving up the ghost.

Secondly, He did this as mediator and surety for us. Herein, as in other things, he acted as a common person and head of his church. He now lays down his life as a ransom for his people, and makes his soul an offering for sin; he deposits and pays it down into the Father's hands,

(a) 2 Tim. i. 12. (b) Acts 7. 59. (c) Psal. 16. 9, 10.

saying, Father, accept this life, this soul of mine, instead of the sinner's soul. He neither lived nor died for himself, and what he did in this act does not only refer to himself, but his people also. He now, as it were, gathers all the souls of his elect into one bundle, and together with his own, makes a solemn surrender of them to his Father, as a precious treasure to be received by him, whenever the time should come for their being loosed from their respective bodies.

Thirdly, He did this as an example. This tells us what we are to do when we come to dye. It is a pattern for our imitation. This is fit work for dying saints. Let them then commit the keeping of their souls to God as a faithful Creator and merciful Redeemer. After this it follows properly, to observe, in the last place,

III. That our blessed Saviour having thus taken care of his spirit, willingly lets go his life. He *bowed his head and gave up the ghost*.

First, He *bowed his head*, as a man does that is expiring. This shewed,

1. The weight of his burthen. The heaviness of that load he stood under. *God laid upon him the iniquity of us all* (a). He put the sin of his people upon the head of the great sacrifice; and to shew the sense he had of this, in it self, insupportable load, he *bowed his head*, though he did not sink beneath its weight. This intimates,

2. The obedience of his soul, and his entire submission to the Father's will. He humbled himself and became obedient to death, in which he was active and voluntary. He accomodated himself to dying work, as *Jacob* gathered up his feet into the bed, and composed himself to sleep.

Secondly, Then he *gave up the ghost*; which signifies

(a) Isa. 53. 6.

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that last act of those who are in the agony of death, wherein there is a total, final failing of the spirits. In the original it is expressed in various terms; which are all rendered in our translation one way. He gave or yielded up the ghost. The evangelist *Matthew* says, *he dismissed, sent out, or left his spirit* (a). His soul was separated from the body, which was thereby really and truly dead. *Mark* and *Luke* say, *he expired* (b); to shew he was truly man, his human soul departed to the world of spirits, and left his body a breathless clod of clay, *efflavit animam*, or *extremum halitum*, he breathed his last. The evangelist *John* says, *he delivered up, surrendered his spirit* (c). All these we render, *he gave up the ghost*: It was said of the *Sareptan* widow's son, his *st. kness* was so sore, that *there was no breath left in him* (d); no soul, no spirit, or life in him; and when *Elijah* prayed he might be restored to life, it was in terms agreeable to that periphrasis of death, *O Lord, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again*: And upon God's hearing the prophet's prayer, it is said, the *child's soul came into him again, and he revived*. God returned his ghost, or spirit to his body again (e). By all which we shall the better apprehend the meaning of this phrase, *he gave up the ghost*. He left, or sent out his spirit. His soul went out of his body. He surrendered or yielded it up. Having undertaken to make his soul an offering for sin, he actually did it, when he resigned his spirit. Then he expired and breathed his last: There was now no breath left in him. This is a common ex-

(a) Matth. 27. 50. ἀφῆκε τὸ πνεῦμα, *emisit, dimisit spiritum*.

(b) Mark 15. 37. Luke 23. 46. ἐξέπνευσε. In the Hebrew, and among the Greeks and Latins, giving up the ghost, is expressed by one word, ὤλη ἐξέπνευσεν, *expiravit*.

(c) John 19. 30. παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα, *reddidit, tradidit spiritum*.

(d) 1 Kings 17. 17. (e) 1 Kings 17. 21, 22.

pression for dying ; and applied indifferently to all men, good or bad ; but usually signifies, an easy, gentle kind of death, in which the soul or spirit is not forcibly extorted, and by meer violence plucked away ; but freely surrendered and yielded up. These dye without much reluctance : and are active as well as passive therein. This is to give up the ghost.

Should it be asked, but what is all this to us ? I answer much every way, as will appear by,

IV. Which is the bringing this home to our selves, by a proper and suitable improvement ; wherein we shall see that this eminently serves for our information, comfort, direction and counsel.

I. *Use*, It serves for our instruction, and teaches us many excellent lessons.

1. *Inf.* That Jesus of *Nazareth* is indeed the Messiah. If all the ancient types and old testament prophecies, that relate to his birth ; all that these spoke of his death and sufferings, are punctually accomplished in him, as they certainly were, had we nothing else, this might serve to settle our hearts in the faith of his person and office ; and abundantly satisfy us, that he is of a truth the Christ of God ; the person that was to come, and we are not to look for another.

2. *Inf.* From hence we learn the glory of the Redeemer's sacrifice. Since by one offering he hath for ever perfected all them that are sanctified. *He once offered up himself*, and no more, *to bear the sins of many.* *We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.* These are glorious attestations to the sufficiency of the Redeemer's sacrifice, one offering finished all that belonged to the great atonement.

3. *Inf.* The greatness of the Redeemer's love. This put him upon all this hard service, and carried him through it to the last. So great was his love,

love, he never gave over working and suffering till he could say, *It is finished*. Here we see the Redeemer's kindness putting forth it self for our relief in the most astonishing manner. It so much surpasses our most exalted thoughts, we can never sufficiently admire it, much less is it possible for us suitably to requite it.

4. *Inf.* Then Christ crucified is the wisdom and power of God. This one word, *it is finished*, pours everlasting contempt upon all the infidels in the world, whose blasphemous mouths are not afraid to speak reproachfully of him, and his sufferings. There is nothing in this that is weak and foolish, for men to laugh or stumble at, whatever they pretend; but a glorious display of the divine perfections; every thing in this constitution, that is necessary to support the Father's honour, and secure his people's happiness. Therefore, whatever others do, says the apostle, *God forbid I should glory in any thing, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. On this he finished the work of our redemption, on this he triumphed over all his, and our enemies; in this therefore will I triumph and glory. *I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*.

5. *Inf.* This tells us what we our selves must expect, and should be always preparing for. E're long it will come to our turn, to *bow the head and give up the ghost*, as many others have done before us. Oh that from hence we might learn to dye!

6. *Inf.* Whenever it does come to this, if we have been helped to finish our work, though with much weakness and many infirmities, we may with humble boldness commend our spirits into the Father's hands.

7. And *lastly*, having done this, we should willingly lay down our lives; and with an easy placid mind, give up the ghost.

II. *Use,*

II. *Use*, This serves for our consolation, and that in every state and condition. Here is the ground of all our triumphs, and joy, in life and death. This administers comfort to us,

1. Under the fear of our spiritual enemies, lest one day we should perish by their hands. In this temptation, our Lord says, *be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*, and all the other enemies of your salvation. Fear not what they can do unto you. I fought them, and routed them, and have triumphed over them. By dying I subdued them. Fear them not, they are all conquered, and these triumphs are yours. You share my victories, and shall your selves, through him that loved you, that died, that conquered, for you, be at last more than conquerors.

2. Under the sense of our own guilt, and the apprehensions of divine wrath due to us for sin. This one word, *it is finished*, is sufficient to answer all the objections that usually arise in the minds of humbled, broken-hearted sinners. Jesus has finished transgression, and made an end of sin; by his once offering up himself, he has made reconciliation for iniquity; so that God now saith, *fury is not in me*; let him take hold of my strength, and be at peace with me, and he shall make peace. He now pardons the chief of sinners, with honour to himself; fear not therefore, O distressed soul, only believe! Justice is satisfied; the grand scruple is over. Conscience need not hesitate, here is a sufficient atonement; the foundation of a solid peace. Christ can and will give rest to the souls of his people. *Come then unto me* in confidence of this, says the blessed Saviour, *all ye that are weary and heavy laden with guilt and wrath, and I will give rest to your souls*. Bring all your burthens, your sorrows, cares and fears to me; rest your weary souls
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in your Redeemer's bosom. He that satisfied God's justice, can pacify your consciences.

3. Under the many imperfections that ever attend even our best works and services. Herein how unlike are we to Christ? all our duties are lame, defective things; and may well be complained of as what God has not found perfect, and filled up with a suitable exercise of grace (a). The best of our services, in respect of that exactness which the law requires, are but as filthy raggs. There is nothing finished or compleat that we do. Now our comfort under the sense of this is, our surety finished all the work given him to do; and how imperfect soever we are in our selves, we are compleat in him. We have a full atonement, a perfect righteousness to depend upon for our acceptance with God.

4. Under the weakness of that good work, we humbly hope, God has begun in us. This at the best is but low and feeble; our beginnings, especially, are small; besides, it meets with a powerful opposition from others: by reason of which, it seems sometimes rather to decline and go backward; and as it is subject to, and may actually fall under great decays, we are apt to fear lest at last it should one day utterly fail. It is yet unfinished and incomplete; much remains still to be done. Our graces need to be strengthened; our lusts and corruptions mortified; all which are great discouragements. But fear not. He that finished the work of redemption without us, will not fail to finish the work of sanctification within us. He that was able to do the one, is faithful and able to do the other. What he has begun, he will put the last hand to, and make it a compleat work. The apostle expresses his confidence of this, *That he which had begun a*

(a) Rev. 3. 2.

good work in the Philippians, and so in any others, would perform it to the great day.

5. Under a sense of our own incapacity to finish the work God has given us to do. He that finished his own work, can enable us to finish ours. Through Christ strengthening us, we can do all things. Through his power and assistance, we shall be more than conquerors, and able to say, *we have fought the good fight, and finished our course*, as the apostle did; though not with equal glory, yet with no less certainty. E're long the feeblest faint shall triumph, and with joyful transport, say, *it is finished*; my course, my conflict, my struggle with sin, Satan, and the world, it is all over and at an end.

6. This may be a great relief to us under the death of our christian friends and relations, especially of our faithful ministers. Another of these is lately taken from us: we have had sickness upon sickness, death upon death, and now sorrow upon sorrow. The apostle owns, if *Epaphroditus* had been sick unto death, as he was nigh unto it, he and others would have had sorrow upon sorrow: he had sorrow in his heart upon one account or another before; and the death of such a faithful servant would have given him a fresh wound. Now this is our case, here is another minister sick unto death. God repeats his strokes, and renews our grief. How many sore breaches in less than one year has he made upon us in city and country? hereby he multiplies sorrows in families and churches. Breaks us, with breach upon breach. Two removed in one day; Lord! wilt thou make a full end? We can't but sorrow, that several of them were taken off in the prime of their days, and their work should be so soon at an end. Here is another called out of the vineyard, before the sun of life was arrived at its full meridian.—This is our sorrow,
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he now labours no more amongst us; will never preach to us more; never pray with us, nor *for us* more. Never instruct and catechise us again. We shall never see his face, nor hear his voice more. He has preached, prayed, and breathed his last. Oh! the sorrow with which this fills many a heart. But remember, my friends, his servants have finished all that work God sent them to do. If they are call'd home, it is because their master had nothing more for them to do here. God has made what use of them he intended; and if they have finished their ministry, why should you desire their longer stay? This was entirely the sense of my dear brother, whose death we now bewail, and would endeavour to improve; as he told me himself upon his sick and dying bed, making use of *David's* words. *If the Lord have any pleasure in me, any more work for me, he will bring me back from this sick bed; but if not, and the Lord say he has no farther occasion for, nor need of my poor service, here I am, let the Lord do with me what seems good in his sight.* He willingly left this world, wife, children, his friends, his flock, tho' dear to him. Having finished his work, *he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.* Then be dumb, and open not your mouths, God has done it. He calls off his servants at pleasure, and can raise up others in their room. Though that's a hard thing, it is not too hard for the Lord. We indeed are at a loss to think how it should be done, and where hands will be found; but the residue of the spirit is with the Lord; who is able to raise up others, make use of them, and bless them. Where he has a work to do, he will never want proper hands to do it.

And besides, remember, for your comfort, if their work be done, their labours also are ceas'd. The storm is over, their sorrows and troubles, their agonies and conflicts, their pains and complaints are all at an end. These are finished. They are now no more in the world.

world. A world of sin, sorrow, and temptations: but gone to the Father, and join'd to the company of pure and perfect spirits, where they see God, and serve him night and day in his temple, having all tears wiped from their eyes. Such consolation does this administer.

And what now should trouble the soul? nothing would, could we rest satisfied in this infinite merit, as the justice of God itself has done. Oh! then that we had a faith suitable to the height of these mysteries. That we could behold this salvation of God in our serious thoughts, and eccho to the Redeemer's shout, *it is finished*. This we glory, this we triumph in. Who is he? what is that which shall condemn? there is now no condemnation. There are none to hurt in all his holy mountain. The sucking child may play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child put his hand to the cockatrice's den. *Oh death! where is thy sting? oh grave! where is thy victory?* Hear then this triumphant shout; let the sound go through the earth, and be heard around the globe. Hear this, all you that have not believed, that you may be brought to believe on the Son of God, dying and conquering. Hear this, all you that have believed, that your faith may gather new life, to your more abundant joy and comfort. There is nothing now to be feared but unbelief, which flurs the whole design, as faith gives to Christ the glory of this great performance. *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.* But this brings us to the last,

III. *Use*, which is for our direction. Let us then conform to this great example; *go and do likewise*. Christ has set us a pattern, that we may follow him both in life and death.

1. In life, that we may be able to say, when we come to dye, our work is finished. See then
That

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That this work is begun. Think not because Christ finished the work of our redemption on the cross, that there remains nothing for us to do. We are not indeed called to the same work, this is not laid upon us; but every man has a work given him to do in this world. There is the great work of faith and repentance to be begun and accomplished in us by the special grace of God. We are commanded to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Our Lord work'd hard, and shall we stand idle all the day?

And as we are called to begin our work, so from the example of our Lord, to begin it betimes. *Wist ye not*, says he to his parents at twelve years old, *I must be about my Father's business?* a blessed pattern to children and young people. Let me then bespeak young ones herein. He that is gone often did so; and being dead, thereby yet speaks. Could that mouth, which is now shut, be opened again, it would be in some such language as this.

Oh don't trifle away the best part of your time. Let not God be put off with the bran, whilst Satan has the flower of your lives. Get up betimes in the morning, if you intend to make a good day's work on't. Be up and doing. Take the morning of your day for your Father's business, and the work of your own salvation.

He that is now taken from you, was himself an example to you herein. Being placed by his parents in religious families, where he was carefully instructed in those things that were necessary to be known in order to his being a christian, as well as what might fit him for the ministry, he had serious impressions upon his mind in his early years; and might be said, like *Obediah*, to *fear the Lord from his youth*; did betimes devote himself to God, and give up himself to his church. This was both his honour and his comfort, and will

will be yours, if you are helped to go and do likewise.

And having begun this work, see that it be carried on. Herein also our blessed Lord has left us an example. He went about continually doing good. It was his meat to do the Father's will. His was a life of action: filled up with service and obedience. Let not us then faint in our minds, and be weary in well doing. Be not sloathful in business, in your Father's business; in the business of your souls, and of another world; but fervent in spirit. Ply the oar, lest a contrary wind and stream drive you back. Give all diligence to increase your grace, and make sure your calling. A man may go idle to hell; but he that would get to heaven must be busy: work, and work hard. Upon this account it is the righteous are said *scarcely to be saved*; not without much difficulty and great pains. See then your path be like that of the just, which shines more and more to the perfect day, and your goodness, not like the morning cloud and early dew that soon passes away.

And then take care to finish your work. Begin betimes; follow it close; and never leave till you can say it is finished. Thus did our blessed Lord, whose example should quicken us to constancy and perseverance. For no man can ever leave the world with comfort, that has not finished his work with care. Nor with confidence at last commend his spirit to God, or with any patience give up the ghost, that never once begun, nor ever minded the great work of his salvation, but spent his whole time in vain pursuits, sensual delights and pleasures, and sinful practices; that lived in ease and pomp, luxury and riot, forgetful of God, and altogether heedless of an immortal soul. Oh that we were wise, and did understand this, and would consider our latter end.

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Though the best have nothing to boast of, and having done all must acknowledge themselves unprofitable servants ; yet it will be matter of rejoicing to think, when our lives are at an end, our work has not been neglected, but we have been, through the grace of God, steadfast and unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord. This was the care of our friend and brother ; and we have reason to believe he now reaps the comfort of it. He had been himself a partaker of the grace of God. Was a great admirer, and a faithful preacher of it. There ran his strain : thither went his spirit. Jesus! the lovely Jesus was his delightful theme. His talent lay in the pulpit, where he was eminently owned and blest'd. His gifts being admirably fitted to awaken sinners and comfort saints. He was a painful, affectionate, rousing preacher: so far from doing the work of the Lord negligently, that he rather too much exhausted his spirits. But it was a good work, and therein he was willing to spend and be spent. The words of life were not suffered to dye on his lips; nor did he so coldly declare the counsel of God, as either to make or leave his hearers cold.

He greatly longed after the salvation of souls, and especially discovered a concern for the rising generation, and above all for the children of the covenant. I have often observed, and I don't doubt but others have done it, how his desires after their welfare were drawn out in prayer. For these his cries went up continually to heaven. And of great use God made him to them, more especially both in preaching and catechising. Many seals among these God gave to his ministry, that we trust will be his crown and rejoicing.

2. In death also let us be conformed to our Saviour's example. Imitate him in the manner of dying. From hence let us learn

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To commend our spirits into the Father's hands. So did our Lord, whose action herein tells us, that the great work of dying persons is to commit their surviving spirits into the hands of God. They are warranted and encouraged to do it by this example. This is what ought, and is supposed to be done before, else instead of committing our souls into the hands, they only, (which is a fearful thing,) fall into the hands of God. How dreadful to think in a dying hour, the Lord never yet received this soul of mine! and if I attempt now to commit it into his hands, he may justly say, it is none of thine to dispose of; thou hast given it away already; sold it to sin, and Satan, to work wickedness; pledged it in another hand; it is therefore none of mine, I never knew it, nor will I receive it. Oh! therefore now let us make this surrender, that we may, with the greater assurance, commit it to his care and keeping in a dying hour, being able to say, Lord, it is a soul thou hast redeemed, justified, and sanctified; it is a spirit that has already been given to thee; a devoted soul before. I now put into thy hands, and only offer thee what is thine already. I do but repeat in my last moments, what I often did in my life-time; now, Lord, take this spirit under thy care and tutelage, defend it from danger, and carry it safe to thy heavenly kingdom.

Having so done then, in conformity to Christ, let us chearfully resign our lives, and give up the ghost. So did our blessed Lord. Now he says, I am no more in the world; having done all I was called to do in it. I have no more sermons to preach, no more miracles to work; no other offering to make, nor any more sufferings to endure; now I go to the Father. Herein he has taught us how to dye, saying, now I leave the world and all things in it, and go to the Father, which is

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much better by far. I dwell no more in *Mesbech*, at a distance from the divine glory; nor sojourn in the tents of *Kedar*, a land of darkness and sorrow. We enter into the shadow of death, but it is to pass into the kingdom of light, the glorious palace of the great king our heavenly Father. Thus, in some good measure, died our friend and brother, who being ask'd when near expiring, and ready to give up the ghost, if he had God's presence with him, answered with some of his last breath, *thro' grace, thro' grace, he had.*

And have the souls of our departed friends and relations been thus commended into the Father's hands? let us be the more patient and quiet under such an afflicting dispensation, since if taken out of our arms, they are now in the Father's bosom, and, in effect, say, weep not for us, but for your selves.

This must be a great satisfaction to his family; they are the widow and the fatherless of one that did solemnly commit them into the same hands where he left himself, to be taken care of, and provided for by him. The Lord himself help the widow to trust in him, and be the father of the fatherless. The flock also bereaved of their shepherd, must by this be comforted in their heavy loss. May they remember the words he hath spoken to them in the name of the Lord. *See the rod and who hath appointed it.* Be preserved together as a compacted body, and be directed to, and as one, agree in a person, to go in and out before them, under whose ministry they may find good pasture.

But remember as a conclusion, how much pleasure soever we take in the happy end, that our friends and relations, or ministers make, all our comforts do arise from the life and death of our blessed Saviour, who left the world with this triumphant shout, *it is finished.*

To him be glory for ever Amen.

A SER.


*Of being Blessed, and made a
Blessing.*

A
S E R M O N
P R E A C H ' D O N
New-Year's-Day, 1724.
*For the Benefit of the Charity-
School in Gravel-Lane,
Southwark.*

G E N. XII. 2.

I will bless thee — and thou shalt be a blessing.



T was *Abraham's* honour to be called the friend of God, and his happiness upon all occasions to be treated as such. God communicated to him his secrets ; for with a friend we are to have no reserves. The style of a friend is the man of my secrets ; we should open our hearts to those we lay in our bosom. When God therefore was about to do a thing that would set the world a wondering, and which he knew would soon come to *Abraham's* ear ; he argues with

himself after the manner of men, saying, *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do (a)?* I have singled him out to be my friend and favourite; I have great things in store for him; and design to make a great man of him; and shall I do a thing, especially so extraordinary a thing that will astonish the world, and make such a report in the country, and not tell him of it? this would not look so friendly, nor consist with the laws and rules of true friendship; therefore God would not do so great a thing, as the destroying the cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, without imparting the secret to his friend *Abraham*, the man of his council.

And as God communicated to him his secrets, he conferr'd upon him great honours; and distinguished him, by many choice and singular favours, which made a communication of goods, according to another of the laws of friendship, that friends must have all things common. Thus the ways of God towards him, were ways of kindness and friendship. He was open-hearted and open-handed to his friend *Abraham*.

And if in any instances he seem'd to act contrary to the rules of this character, as it might be thought he did, when he tried him by a command to leave his father's house, and afterwards to offer up his only son; wherein he must deny himself, not only as to his present possessions, but his future hopes; if God, I say, did thus try him, it was to render his obedience the more heroick and conspicuous, and set him up as a pattern to after ages of all those graces, which were so eminently display'd in those illustrious acts of obedience. It's the first of these we are concern'd with, which runs thus in the words just before those of the text. *Go get thee out of thy country, from thy kindred and thy father's house,*

(a) Gen. 18, 17.

to a land which I shall shew thee (a). A hard saying to flesh and blood! his country must be dear to him; his kindred still dearer; and his Father's house dearest of all. Now, must he leave his country, which claims such a share in his affection, as it was his native soil, and the place where he drew his first breath? and if he does quit his country, may not he be allowed to take some of his kindred along with him? must he go alone, having none to solace his exile? and must he go he knows not whither, to a land that was yet to be shewn him (b)? But so it is, his country was become idolatrous; his father's house would be a continual snare to him; there he could not stay without danger of infection, and therefore all this must be left at the command of God. Now that it might go down the easier, the command is followed with a most encouraging promise, in the verse where we have the text; the command makes the promise necessary; and the promise renders the command practicable. One is the rule of our duty; and the other an argument for it. The promise runs thus, *I will make of thee a great nation; I will bless thee, and thy name shall be great, and thou shalt be a blessing.*

This promise, or rather constellation of promises, was made first and immediately to *Abraham*, in which there are some things personal and peculiar to himself. I shall briefly run through the several parts thereof, as it relates to *Abraham*; and then shew of what use it is, and how far it may be applied to our selves. Then God here promises *Abraham*

To bless him, and this in his own person. Accordingly, he bestowed upon him all sorts of blessings, both temporal and spiritual. He blessed him with a large estate, and in time with a numerous offspring to possess it. The for-

(a) Gen. 8. 1.

(b) Heb. 11. 8.

mer reliev'd him, as *Pareus* observes upon the place, against the fear of poverty, when he was obliged to leave what he had in his own country, and his father's house; and the latter against the grief of *orphany*, when he had no children of his own; but one born in his house, was like to be the heir of his estate. No, says God, *this shall not be thine heir, but he shall come forth out of thine own bowels; and he said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be (a).*

By this means, in the next place, God made of him a great nation. He became the head of a large people; and thereby his name was made great in the world. This was the report which *Abraham's* servant made of his master unto those to whom he was sent; *the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men servants, and maid servants, and camels, and asses (b).* God had given him a good estate; and a son, even *Isaac*, upon whom he had settled it all. But the far greater part of *Abraham's* happiness was,

That God blessed him with spiritual blessings; such for instance as,

A gratuitous and effectual call, from an idolatrous house and country: *Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor, dwelt of old time on the other side of the flood, and served other gods; the place where some think idolatry had its first rise. Abraham was born and bred up in this idolatrous country, and lived some time in it. But God by his special grace and favour brought him out from among that people; as Joshua tells them, I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood (c).* He snatch'd him by a merciful and a mighty hand, as a brand

(a) Gen. 15. 2, 4, 5. (b) Gen. 24. 35. (c) Joshua 24. 2, 3.

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out of the burning; called him from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, an idolatrous country; and turn'd him from dumb idols, to serve himself, the living and true God: such a deliverance was a special mercy to *Abraham*. Again,

God entred into a covenant with him, and his seed after him. *When Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to him, and said, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect; and I will make my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting covenant to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee (a).* This was a great blessing and comfort to *Abraham*. And then

He had the blessedness of justification. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness (b).* He had the happiness to have his person and services accepted of God. Thus *Abraham* was blessed in himself. But besides this,

God promised to make him a blessing to others. *I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing.* Some understand this as an amplification of the former, where the abstract is used for the concrete, *thou shalt be altogether and greatly blessed.* Others take it actively, and either read it, be thou a blessing; or as we do, with the Seventy, thou shalt be a blessing; which manner of speaking, in the *Hebrew*, is vehement and emphatical, and notes God's powerful influence. Thou shalt not fail to be a blessing, I'll make thee one, who can command the blessing, and makes every man what he is. He should be blessed himself, and made a blessing to others, *non in te claudetur, sed solo ex te etiam ad alios dimanabit mea benedictio*, says *Pareus*. This blessedness should not be confined to his person, but reach to others, who upon many accounts would be the better for him,

(a) Gen. 17. 1. 2, 7. (b) Rom. 4. 3.

So *Abraham* was made a blessing to his family, to his children, and servants, and to all under his roof. *I know Abraham, he will command his children, and his household after him, &c (a).* These would have cause to rise up and call him blessed: having had the happiness and advantage of his seasonable instructions, his wife and prudent counsel and advice, and holy example. He was the means of conveying blessedness to his posterity, who were beloved for their father's sake.

He was a blessing also to the church of God, as he was the progenitor of Christ; that seed in which all the families of the earth should be bless'd. He was the father of the faithful; from him sprung the Messiah, and the whole church of God, numerous as the stars of heaven, and the sand on the sea shore.

He was a blessing to the world, as he was an eminent pattern of piety and holiness, of faith, self-denial, submission and resignation to the will of God. Thus was *Abraham* blessed, and made a blessing. Whence,

Obs. It's a very desirable thing, and should be our great concern to be blessed, and made a blessing. This I call *Abraham's* blessing. Higher than which, our ambition need not carry us; and a lower blessing than this should not content us. Tho' there were some things in the promise peculiar to *Abraham*, yet we are in many things to look on him as a pattern to others; for this part of the blessing, though in a different degree, belongs to all the faithful, as the apostle tells us. *As many as are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (b).* And again, *The blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles thro' faith (c),* to be blessed themselves, and made a blessing to others. I shall

(a) Gen. 18. 18. (b) Gal. 3. 9. (c) Gal. 3. 14.

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I. Enquire into and consider the nature of the mercy here promised.

II. Shew the desirableness of it ; and why it should be our concern to obtain it ; and then,

III. Improve the whole.

I. We are to enquire into, and open the nature of the mercy here promised. So far as it relates to *Abraham*, we have already considered it, and now as it refers to others. The mercy then lies in two things.

In being blessed our selves ; and a blessing to others. This includes in it all that's good and desirable. Every thing a man could wish for to compleat his character. Our own happiness is hereby first secured, and then according to our capacities the welfare of others promoted. This in the patriarchal dialect was the form of blessing men, or wishing well to them. *God give you the blessing of Abraham (a).* Which is,

First, To be blessed our selves. Not so much with outward and temporal good things, such as riches and honours, health and long life, comfortable relations, &c. which in themselves are blessings, and God gives to his people, so far as he sees good for them ; wherein he is to be thankfully acknowledged, and with which he should be faithfully served : But to be blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, this is to be blessed indeed, and would be a full answer to such a prayer as that of pious Jabez, *O that thou would'st bless me indeed (b).* These are the things for which the apostle, with a most enlarged heart, gives thanks to God. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings, &c. (c).* Now these

(a) Gen. 28.

(b) 1 Chro. 4. 10.

(c) Eph. 1. 3, 4.

blessings are either essential unto, and constitutive of christianity, or those that belong to our comfortable and well-being as Christians.

There are blessings essential to salvation, that enter into our real happiness, and are constitutive of religion. And what these are may be gathered from the instance of *Abraham*, viz.

An effectual call, and saving conversion to God. So *Abraham* was blessed, when God brought him out of an idolatrous country and family. In the apostle *Peter's* account, this is one of the first blessings in time God bestows upon his people. *Having raised up his Son from the dead, he sent him first unto you, to bless you, in turning away every one from his iniquity (a).*

The justification of our persons. So *Abraham* was blessed of God; and Christ having been made a curse for us, and thereby redeemed us from it, this blessing of *Abraham* is come upon the gentiles; and a vast blessing it is, to have all our sins forgiven; not to have any of our iniquities imputed to us, to have our persons and services accepted with God thro' the righteousness of a Redeemer, so as never to come into condemnation; but instead of that to have a right and title given us to the heavenly inheritance: blessed is the man that has all this done for him (b).

A covenant interest in and relation to God. So *Abraham* was blessed himself, as we have observed above; God made a covenant with him, to be his God, and the God of his seed after him. To be blessed then is to have God make with us an everlasting covenant, wherein he gives himself to us to be our God, our eternal portion and happiness, and takes us to be his people; he gives himself to us with all his perfections, and takes

(a) Acts 3. ult.

(b) Psal. 32.

us to himself with all our faults: this is the chiefest spiritual blessing; for all things are spiritual as they refer to him who is the original, the measure and standard of all that's spiritual, and so the most spiritual. Such a relation to God will administer the most effectual consolation and be the best support to us in all cases, and at all times; whilst we live, and when we come to die. No earthly occurrence can really impair the happiness, which is secured by a covenant interest. *David's* comfort, at all times and in all the events of life, was God's covenant; when he was sorely distressed at any time, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. When he bewailed the disorders of his house, and was looking back upon the many confusions he had lived to see there, and forwards to what he apprehended was coming upon it, he comforted himself with this, *thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant*. When the *Psalmist*, whoever he was, whether *Asaph* or *David*, should find his flesh and his heart failing him, his great support would be from God; *thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever*. All is well if God be ours (a). Another part of the blessing is,

The gift of the spirit. So the apostle tells us, in the place already referred to (b), *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith*. This is a blessing so essential to salvation, how much so ever despised by some, that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, it's certain he is, he can be none of his; let his pretences to other things be what they will (c).

Lastly, A right to the heavenly inheritance. This was typified by the earthly Canaan, which

(a) *Psal.* 73. 26. (b) *Gal.* 3. 14. (c) *Rom.* 8.

God promised and gave to *Abraham*, and his posterity after him: but we desire and God has promised another and better country, that is an heavenly: an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us. These then are blessings essential to, and that have salvation in them (a).

But besides these, there are those blessings that belong to our comfortable and well being, as Christians, such as

An increase of grace and holiness. Next to the thing it self, a growth in it is to be desired. Accordingly it's a great blessing to find religion thrive in our souls, that whatever decay there may be in other things, our health, natural strength, our estate, &c. That our inward man is renewed day by day, our souls prosper and are in health. There is a blessed increase of light and life, of grace and holiness, our improvements in religion bear some proportion to our helps and advantages. We grow in faith, in repentance, hatred of sin, love to God, charity to one another, in humility, patience, and self-denial; are more dead to sin and the world, and alive to God every day. Our knowledge of divine things is enlarged; we are better instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom; are more careful and exact in our walk and behaviour; our hearts stand in awe of God, and we preserve a becoming reverence of him in our minds. Conscience has a tenderness upon it, with respect to sin and duty. This is soul prosperity and a great blessing; but I am afraid, a rare thing in our day. Moreover after this it's a great happiness

To be filled with joy and peace, from the sense and assurance of God's love; which is the lifting up the light of his countenance upon us. This

(a) Heb. 6. 9.

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is one of those blessings the apostle prays for on behalf of the Romans, *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing, that ye may abound in hope thro' the power of the holy Ghost (a).*

After this manner the priests of old were directed to bless the people. *Jehovah bless thee and keep thee, Jehovah make his face shine on thee, and be gracious to thee. Jehovah lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (b).* The Hebrew doctors observe, that Jehovah here is not only thrice mentioned, but every time with a different accent in the original, which they think has a mystery in it, that can't be better and with greater probability applied than to the three persons in the God-head; and tells us, that all our blessedness comes from Jehovah the Father, Jehovah, the Son, and Jehovah the holy Ghost. Whether the variety of accents be sufficient to support this notion; yet since Jehovah is thrice mentioned, some, after this conjecture of the Jewish rabbies, have ventured to explain this solemn benediction in the following manner; the first shews the grace and love of God the Father in blessing his people; and giving them all good things for this life, and that to come. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, &c (c).* The second respects Christ, *Jehovah cause his face to shine on thee, or be lightsome to thee;* where for face, the Chaldee, as Aynsworth observes, put *Shechinah*, the divine Logos, who is the light of the world, and whose face shines as the sun, and who is gracious to us as is here said; and from whom grace is prayed for by the apostle, *(d).*

The third branch signifies the applying and communicating God's favour to the conscience, which

(a) Rom. 15. 13. (b) Numb. 6. 25. (c) Eph. 1. 3.

(d) 2 Cor. 13. 14.

gives us joy and peace, and is the communion of the holy Ghost. So that here we have, as they apprehend, the love of the Father, the grace of Christ, and the communion of the holy Ghost. But whether so much stress is to be laid on such a criticism, I will not say. So much we are sure it tells us, that Jehovah alone blesses his people; and that he does this by making his face to shine on them; and lifting up the light of his countenance upon them; that the assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the holy Ghost, are great and valuable blessings, and tho' not to be desired with that positiveness we do those things that are essential to our salvation; yet are by no means to be neglected but carefully sought, as what belong so much to our comfort and well being. I come now to the other part of the character, which is,

Secondly, To be a blessing. I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing. The former makes us what it becomes us, and we ought to be to our selves, men of personal virtues and good qualities; which will be our own happiness, and a comfort to our selves. The latter is what we ought to be to others, useful and serviceable in our day. The one is necessary unto and the foundation of the other, and in the order of things must go before it. We are first to secure our own happiness, and then consult the good of others, and do what lies in our power to promote their welfare.

And here we may consider men according to their different circumstances in the world; where we find some placed in a publick station, and moving in a higher sphere, which renders them capable of a more extensive service; others are fixed in a private station, and move in a lower sphere of activity; according to which there are different degrees of usefulness.

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We may also consider persons, first, as standing in some particular relation to others, whether it be in a higher, or more inferior station; and then, as particular members of the whole community.

1st, As standing in a particular relation to others, either in a more exalted or inferior station. And then persons are a blessing by an honourable and faithful discharge of those duties, which belong to them, in their several places and relations in the world; either as *magistrates, ministers, heads of families*, or *members* of some religious societies.

1. As *magistrates*, either supreme, or subordinate. The sovereign ruler of all things makes a distinction among men, and by the orders of his providence, allots them their several ranks and degrees in the world. The ridiculous notion of levelling has no foundation in nature; it's no more good in reason, than possible in fact. Distinction of rank is necessary for the œconomy and good order of the world. In the heavens there are stars of a different magnitude. The earth, our natural world, is not all alike, nor cast into a level; it has mountains and plains, hills and valleys: so in the political world, all men are not alike, some are governours, others governed; some are the higher powers, others are called upon to be subject to them: some are invested with authority, and set to rule over men. *By me, says wisdom, kings reign, and princes decree justice.* This power it's confessed may be used to purposes directly contrary to the very end for which it was given, and so the persons invested with it become an infamy to their office, and a plague to their country. They that should be the fathers of their people, are the robbers and spoilers of the land. *As a roaring lion and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people (a).* These are things we have heard of in

(a) Prov. 28, 15.

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many other parts of the world, and have seen too much of at home; but God be praised, it's our happiness now to be freed from this plague above all nations of the world. But tho' this is sometimes the case, yet it's certain these have an opportunity of doing much good; and when they answer the ends of government are real blessings to their people. *He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God, and he shall be the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear sunshine after rain (a).* Good kings are truly nursing fathers; and make their people as happy, as themselves are great. Such an one God has blessed us with, who makes the laws of the land the rule of his government, and by the mildness of his administration, the equity and wisdom of his reign, renders us a flourishing and happy nation.

Subordinate and inferior magistrates also, by the appointment of God, and the nature of their office, might be instruments of great good to mankind, and a blessing to the world. Indeed when they are given up to softness and luxury, and are altogether careless of publick affairs; covetous and self-seeking, and aim at nothing but raising their families, and enlarging their honours and estates, especially when they are themselves the open breakers of those very laws they are appointed to guard, and bound by their office to punish the violation of in others; these abuse their power, and are rather a curse than a blessing to the world.

But, when men of a publick character, vested with power and authority, distinguished from numbers of their fellow subjects by their exalted stations and employments, when these are patterns to o-

(a) 2 Sam. 23.

thers of vertue and sobriety; and are so far from leading others to any dishonourable and unworthy practices and customs, which make way for dark designs, and give an opportunity to commit lewdness under various disguises, that they rather discountenance them, these are great blessings.

And when they are not only careful to do good themselves, but are industrious to restrain others from doing evil, they don't bear the sword in vain; but are really terrors to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well. They endeavour to suppress all profaneness and impiety themselves; and countenance and encourage those that would be assisting to 'em herein; being desirous to carry on the work of reformation, and suppress those evil things by their authority which they discountenance by their example: when they are thus the ministers of God for good, and impartially execute judgment and justice; and farther, when they are men of publick spirits, that fear God and hate covetousness; seek the common good rather than their own private advantage; these are great blessings in their day.

Such a one was *Nehemiah*, who tells us he was the king's cup-bearer (a), tho' not of the king's religion. He was not it seems excluded from an office of honour, and advantage, upon a pretence he was an enemy to the established religion, and, as might be uncharitably insinuated, perhaps to the state it self. And being in an office so near the king, he made the best use of it he could for the good of his people; not content with his own honour he sought the welfare of *Israel*, and did them all the good offices he could. Such a magistrate was *Job* in his day, who says in his own vindication, *I delivered the poor that cried, and the father-*

(a) Neh. i. 11.

less that had none to help him ; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me : I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy : I put on righteousness and it clothed me ; my judgment was a robe of diadem. I was eyes to the blind, feet was I to the lame, and a father to the poor : the cause that I knew not I searched out. I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth (a). Such magistrates are a great blessing to mankind, and would go a great way to better the world ; and promote that righteousness among men which so much exalts a nation.

2. As ministers. How much sorer their persons are despised, and their office vilified and run down, as a needless and useless thing, when they are duly qualified for it, and carefully perform the duties of it ; when they magnify their office, not only by crying up the sacredness of the order, but fulfilling the work of their function, they are of signal service and great blessings to the world.

Indeed bad ministers, who instead of being examples of virtue, are patterns of vice and ringleaders in iniquity, only harden men in their impieties, and do great mischief in the world. They that put no difference between the clean and unclean, the holy and profane ; that lay a great stress where none or little is to be laid, and little or none upon the things that deserve it most ; make a great noise about lesser matters and comparatively trifles, while they neglect the weightier things of the law ; they that sow pillows under men's elbows and daub with untemper'd mortar ; if any such are to be found, they harden men in their wickedness, and devour the souls, they are appointed by their office to save.

But good and faithful ministers are the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth. They watch for the souls of men, as those that must give ac-

(a) Job 29. 12. — 17.

count. They are sent to open men's eyes; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God; to instruct the ignorant, awaken the secure, and reduce the wandering. These warn men of their danger, and excite them to their duty: set before them the advantages of religion, and the evil of sin; that how pleasant soever it may be in the commission, it's most uncomfortable in the review, and will always be bitterness in the end. These soften and sooth men's spirits, inspire them with zeal for, and love to God; with tenderness and compassion to their fellow-creatures; change their spirit and temper, amend their lives, and form their minds for things heavenly and divine. These are blessings also, as they edify and perfect the body of Christ; build up christians in their most holy faith; establish them in the truth; and confirm them in the profession of it; they comfort the feeble minded; resolve the doubting, and settle the wavering.

They are blessings also, by their zealous and prudent defence of the truth, both by preaching and writing. *Demetrius* had a good report of all men and of the truth it self; could that speak, it would be sure to give him a good word and speak well of him, for his kindness to, and concern for it. They are set for the defence of this, and can't forego it without betraying their trust. Such ministers as these, that faithfully pursue the main ends of their office, are great blessings to the world.

3. As heads of families. So parents and masters may be great blessings to their children and servants. Such was *Abraham*, who has that honourable character given by God himself, *I know Abraham that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord (a).*

(a) Gen. 18. 19.

Such a blessing was *Joshua*, as is evident from that resolution, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (a)*. He would serve the Lord himself, and endeavour to bring all in his house to do so too; all under his roof, so far as his example, his influence and authority would extend, should be brought to agree and consent to this. Such a blessing was *David*, who walk'd in his house in a wise way, with a perfect heart, and thereby recommended religion to all under his care.

Such a faithful discharge of the duties of this relation, would contribute very much to an universal reformation. Were heads of families careful to perform the duties of that relation; would these erect a family altar to the Lord; and offer up thereon a daily sacrifice, morning and evening to God; whereby their houses would resemble God's, which he says, shall be called an house of prayer; and were this accompanied with a constant reading, at least, of the holy scriptures; were they careful to instruct those under their roof, and bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; hinder them as much as possible from falling into ill hands; and guard them against evil company, the bane of youth (for evil communication corrupts good manners;) if these are careful to fortify them, as they grow up, against the errors and vices of the age, that thereby they might be brought to flee youthful lusts: and, once more, did they endeavour to allure them to a liking of religion, by their own exemplary holiness, by their prudent and winning behaviour, they would be great blessings to their families, and contribute very much to the world's amendment.

4. As members of particular religious societies. Men of zeal for God and his honour, and of pru-

(a) Josh. 24. 15.

dence in the conducting it ; who set themselves to promote the welfare of that body, whereof they are members ; that study to preserve it's order and peace and purity, and prevent all unnatural unchristian strifes and contentions among them ; and every thing else that would defile the temple of God : persons that don't forsake the assembling themselves together, as the manner of some has been, but as opportunity offers, conscientiously attend the worship of God ; and in a word, behave themselves in all things becoming the relation in which they stand to others ; a few such zealous active men are the life of society ; of singular service to it while they live, and will be dearly miss'd when they die.

But we propos'd also to consider persons,

2dly, In a single and more private capacity, as they refer to the whole community. So every man may be of some use and service whatever be his state and condition in the world. *Abraham* was a blessing wherever he went ; so every good man should be and is more or less to the world, to the vicinage, and places where his lot is cast. There are degrees of usefulness. Some are righteous men, just and honest, harmless and inoffensive, do no body any hurt ; but then others are good men of publick spirits, and publick blessings, eminently useful and serviceable, not barely do no hurt, but do a great deal of good ; thousands are the better for them, so that some would even dare to die for them.

Now there are various ways in which all persons more or less may be blessings. I'll instance in these that follow.

1. By a sincere and hearty embracing religion, and an unfeigned dedication of themselves to God. This, I know, is what makes us blessed our selves, and in that light we have consider'd it already. If

thou be wise, thou art wise for thy self (a). But we are now to look upon it in another light, as it does not only make us blessed, but a blessing. It's not barely a happiness to our selves, but an advantage even to others: *Onesimus* was once unprofitable; but now that he is converted, tho' but a servant, he became profitable both to *Paul* and *Philemon*. An increase of sinful men to augment the fierce anger of the Lord, are a great curse to any people, as they help to fill up the measure of their sins, till it overflows in a deluge of desolation (b). But an increase of godly men in the room of their pious ancestors is a great blessing to the world. These fill up the vacancies death is continually making in families and churches; and so are a blessing to the present age and the hopes of the next. When the old stock wears off, there is a succession in these to stand up in their room; so that religion shall not be lost out of our world; but continued in this way from age to age, and transmitted to the next generation: these keep up the name of Christ in the world, according to that promise; *His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun (c).* which is an eminent prophecy of the Messiah, and foretells that his name shall be continued to all generations. Exactly according to the original it may be thus render'd. *Before the sun son'd shall be his name (d);* and such as these are great blessings to the church of God as they keep up Christ's name in the world. 2. They

(a) Prov. 9. 12. (b) Numb. 32. 14, 15. (c) Psal. 72. 17.

(d) There are two ways of continuing his name, (1.) in his own person. His name shall be continued as long as the sun. The word we render [continued] among the Rabbins is the name of the Messiah. *Finnon*, from the root *Nm*. Before the sun ever was, *Finnon* is his name from everlasting, er'e ever the sun was made, he was a Son, he was before the sun from everlasting; and he shall be after the sun to everlasting. As the sun in the heavens

2. They are blessings by the holiness of their lives, answerable to the profession they make of religion. If men were prompted and employed by the devil himself, they could not take a more effectual method to make the gospel abhorred, than by living as some christians do; this makes the name of God and his doctrine to be blasphemed. Where men's practices visibly contradict their

is one and the same sun, so the sun in the church is one and the same sun of righteousness. (2.) His name is continued in his people, by a constant succession of them. He is a Son to continue his Father's name, and he shall have a seed to continue his own. As the different kinds of creatures are continued in their individuals by succession: and as the species of mankind in particular is preserved the same way, since as one generation goes another comes, so Christ's name is continued in his seed; there will be a constant succession of christians to keep up the name of Christ in the world: If some are dying off and daily passing, yet his name shall not be extinct, for others shall rise up in their room. The parents name is kept up and continued in their children, so his name shall be propagated in the same way, according to the word here used which comes from *נִבְּרָה*, a son, which the *Latins* have made a word for [*filiabitur*] and we may make an *English* word for; *his name shall be sonn'd.*

And this name is not the less permanent, because it is by succession. It was said of old, he that seeks *Rome* in *Rome* will find but little of it: those vast stones, high walls and strong fortifications which might be thought immoveable, these are mov'd and gone. These permanent things in themselves run to ruin, age wears them out, *immota labascunt*. But *Tyber*, the river that's always in motion, remains still. Immoveable things are removed, things always in motion remain, *qua perpetuo sunt agitata manent*. *Horace*, to expose the folly of those that delay to live well, and put it off from time to time, resembles it to the rustick, that thought he would sit down on the bank of the river till all the water was pass'd away.

*Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis; at ille
Labitur & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

Hor. ep. lib. 1.

Thus Christ's name continues by succession, as the waters are continually passing, and yet the river remains, by a constant supply of new and fresh streams.

principles and pretensions, religion must needs be a great sufferer, men's mouths will be opened against it, to speak contemptibly of it, nay they are tempted to disbelieve the whole of it, and conclude there is nothing in it. Wo be to those men by whom these offences come; these give a handle to scepticism and infidelity, and greatly help to promote it in the world.

On the other hand, when men bring the latent principles of Christianity into actions that are visible to all the world, they prove excellent orators for religion, and have a mighty power to persuade. We shall attract others by the example of a holy conversation, and when our light shines so bright that others may see their way to heaven by the light of it, and are induced by our actions to glorify our Father who is in heaven, then we do service to the world (a). Examples teach more powerfully than precepts. There's a winning virtue, an alluring, attractive force, in a divine and heavenly conversation; when men are true to their word, just and honest in their dealings, generous and kind in their temper, sober in their lives, and walk in wisdom towards those that are without, they are helpful to promote religion, as they reconcile the minds of others to it; beget in them an esteem of holiness, and recommend it to their practice.

3. By a steadfastness in the ways and service of God. When, like the *Galatians*, men did run well, but something or other hinders 'em, that they don't proceed, they begin their course, but leave off before it's finished; their goodness is as a morning cloud and an early dew that passes away; they begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh; they leave their first love, forget the kindness of their youth,

(a) Mat. 5. 14, 16.

and make shipwrack of faith and a good conscience: these do great mischief in the world, because they bring up an evil report of the good ways of God, as the unbelieving spies did of the promised land; it looks as if they had found some iniquity in God, and his ways, and had now lit upon a better service and master. These, like deserters, do great disservice, indeed a double injury to religion, for besides the loss of a man, they weaken the hands of others, and tempt them also to desert. Whereas the zeal and constancy of others may provoke many to abide with God, against all temptations to the contrary: their steadfastness in religion may animate and encourage others to persevere in their profession, and hold it fast without wavering; as *Joshua's* firm resolution to serve the Lord, he and his house, fired the people with warm zeal against all false Gods; and fixed 'em the faster in the service of the true God (a).

4. By setting on foot or encouraging useful designs, and projects for a common good. *The liberal man devises liberal things (b)*. He casts about in his thoughts which way he may be most serviceable to others; and not only falls in with, but himself contrives things for publick service, and propounds them to others. The churl or niggard, called there the vile, mean spirited man, contrives how he may save what he has, and keep it for himself; but the liberal man projects how to use and improve what he hath for the good of others, and this in his life-time, and also leaves what can be spared from others (for God hates robbery for burnt offerings) for the support of these designs when he is dead and gone. The liberal man lays the foundation of some useful project; begins it himself, that others may carry on the design, and

(a) Josh. 24. 15, 16. (b) Isa. 32. 8.

continue it by succession. Such as schools, catechising exercises, preaching lectures, societies for reformation, conveniences for the aged and poor, or sick, diseased, wounded and lame, &c. Men of this publick spirit are great blessings to the world; many, in after ages, will rise up and call 'em blessed. The zeal of one in some very useful designs has provoked many; as in the case before us, the foundation of this place and school was laid long since, by an eminent and worthy citizen (a), a man of a large heart, in whom was an excellent spirit, of whom it may be truly said he devised liberal things; and this thing among others; which has not only stood to this day, but been built upon, and considerably improved by the benevolence of those that annually contribute towards it; and the great care and vigilance of the worthy managers. Such are blessings in their day, and do great service to the world.

By their means, instruction has been handed out to those that otherwise might probably have been bred up in barbarism and ignorance; and many have been disposed of to proper employments, and settled in good families, that might else have been left to the wide world; and tho' it may not succeed in all as we could wish, yet as the husbandman sows his seed, not knowing what harvest he shall reap, so you go on still sowing in hope, not knowing what success God will give you.

5. By particular acts of charity and beneficence for the relief of others. Tho' we may not be capable of forming such designs as we have been speaking of our selves, yet according to our abilities we may contribute toward the support of them; or afford some seasonable relief to the poor and needy, wherein the different abilities of per-

(a) Mr. Arthur Shallet.

sons are to be considered. They that God has blessed with an abundance may do a great deal this way; and they that have but little may yet cast in their mites into God's treasury, and by this means be made a blessing. So was *Job* in his day; many people were the better for him, and particularly the poor. Nothing could be more false and injurious than that charge of his friends, *thou hast taken a pledge of thy brother for nought; and stripped the naked of their cloathing. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry* (a). A dreadful charge had it been true; but, to *Job's* honour and comfort, it was every word false. His enemies had robbed him of his flocks and estate, and now his friends would rob him of his good name; and it is hard to say which were the greater plunderers of the two. A man's good name is more valuable and precious than his wealth; its therefore against all the laws of charity and justice to raise such calumnies against another as tend to destroy it. But innocency it self will not always be a security against a foul and false tongue, as appears in *Job's* case, who protested against all these things with both his hands, and with the greatest sincerity declares the direct contrary to all this was true. The charge was groundless and false, there was not one word of truth in it, as appears from that seeming boast of himself, to which they had compelled him. *When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and he that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy* (b). *He had not eaten his morsel alone; he saw none perish for*

(a) *Job* 22. 6, 7; (b) *Job* 29. 11, 12, &c.

want of cloathing, or any poor without covering. The meat of his table had fed the hungry, and the fleece of his flock had cloathed the naked. If all this was not true, he is content the greatest of curses should fall upon him, *then let my arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone (a).*

Men of this character are indeed a blessing. Their acts of charity are of double service, as they do immediately relieve the necessities of the poor, and then by their example stir up and excite others to the like generous deeds; and don't only do good themselves, but provoke others to love and good works.

But some perhaps will be ready to object, alas! I am a dry tree, no such fruit is to be expected from me: I am a poor inferior person, a cypher, and one that makes no figure in the world, and what blessing can I be to others? I shall therefore proceed farther to instance in some other things wherein persons of all ranks and conditions may be blessings to the world: as,

6. By seasonable and wholesome counsel and advice. I mention this because there are a set of men in the-world that do great mischief to others by the ill impressions their insinuations make upon their minds. *My son, says Solomon, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not (b).* He supposes there would be some such as these in the world that would entice others to sin, and endeavour to make them as bad as themselves; debauch their principles; corrupt their morals; take off their fear and awe of God; make a mock of sin, and laugh at those that scruple to commit it: these would say to their acquaintance and friends, and fellow-servants, come cast in your lot among us; take your fill of pleasure; never tie up your selves to

(a) Job 31. 16, 22.

(b) Prov. 1. 10.

the strict and severe rules of religion; throw off the shackles and restraints these would lay you under: these infuse into their minds principles of disloyalty to God, and would draw them into a conspiracy with themselves against heaven. Many such evil instruments there are, that like *Jeroboam*, sin themselves, and make others to sin, as he did *Israel*, and thereby do great mischief in the world: these are factors for hell: the bane of society and a great curse to the world. Now, on the contrary, when we are agents for heaven, and counter-mine those that are Satan's emissaries; we desire to be good our selves, and endeavour to make others so too; are not content to go alone to heaven, but would gladly have company thither; and therefore do what we can to bring in our friends, relations, and acquaintance; by our counsel and advice persuading them to enter into and walk in the paths of vertue, by telling them wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace. If they doubt the truth on't, and know not how to believe it, invite them as *Philip* did *Nathanael*, who asked if any good thing could come out of *Nazareth*, to come and see. And as we allure them into the ways of piety and vertue, so dissuade them from the paths of sin, warn them of their danger, and caution them not to listen to the *Syren's* song; tell them these steps lay hold of hell, destruction and misery are in their paths. These are things in which there is no fruit; what they'll be ashamed of hereafter, and undone by in the end: this way men may do a great deal of good, and be eminent blessings to others. A little captive maid droped a word of advice, *would God my Lord was with the prophet in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy*; and this occasioned *Naaman's* healing and conversion. If thou seest a man err from the truth, and dost not rail at him
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and revile him, and endeavour to bring him under publick disgrace and reproach, but rather shew him his error and convert him from it; such an one, for his encouragement and comfort, *saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of faults*; whereby he is made a great blessing. The converted sinner will have cause to bless God for him as long as he lives, yea to all eternity (a).

7. They are a blessing that lay to heart, and mourn over the many abominations of the times and places in which they live. These are so far from having any fellowship themselves with the unfruitful works of darkness, that they rather reprove them; lament them, are grieved for them, bewail and mourn over them; how light soever others make of these things, they lye with great weight upon their spirits. For these things they mourn, whether the land does or no; for the many oaths and curses daily heard in their streets; for the drunkenness, uncleanness, sabbath-breaking, and other instances of men's contempt of God's laws; for corruption in doctrines as well as morals; for the atheism and infidelity of the age; the slights put on the glorious gospel; the neglect of Christ, his person and blood, and despise done to the spirit of grace; for the inclinations many discover to go back to *Egypt*; for the loss of a publick spirit; the failing of faithful men; and the degeneracy of the rising generation; for that evil spirit gone thro' the land; a spirit of rancour, hatred, and malice, &c. for these things they weep, they mourn as the prophet says, *mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water*; for these things, as the men did that had a mark set upon them, for these abominations they sigh and cry: these things it's not in their power to prevent, but it's in

(a) Jam. 5. 19, 20.

their heart daily to deplore and mourn over in secret at the foot of God; and if others are filling up the measure of the nation's guilt, these endeavour still to be emptying of it; and so are not only blessed themselves, but made a blessing.

8. By believing fervent prayers to God for others. So far every good man may and does go, tho' he can rise no higher. If he can do little or nothing else, let him pray for *Jerusalem*, and so be a blessing. Shew the love you have to your dear country this way, tho' you can hardly express it in any other. Pray for the land of your nativity; for its welfare and prosperity. Pray for rulers and magistrates, the King and his family. Pray for all in authority under him and over you. Pray for your families and posterity, for the whole church of God. Pray for the ministers of Jesus Christ, that God would pour down upon them his spirit, and give them a double portion of his gifts and graces.

The great apostle often bespoke this for himself and his fellow labourers; *brethren pray for us*, we have a great work upon our hands; and like the high priest, are compassed with infirmities; we have our wants and weaknesses, temptations and difficulties, failings and imperfections; don't despise the temptations we have in our flesh; nor upbraid and reproach us with our infirmities, but rather have compassion on us, pity us, and pray for us, that we may know our work and do it, that we may have skill for it, and success in it. Brethren, pray for us; however reproached with the contrary, we had rather have the benefit of your prayers than the command of your purses.

Thus every private christian may be a blessing. There's not the poorest meanest saint on earth, but may be a great wrestler with God and obtain a blessing not only for himself, but others, tho'

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he is not capable of doing much for them in any other way. Praying men are real blessings to the world. The safety of *Israel* depended greatly upon the intercession of *Moses*. Under heaven afterwards they had not so sure a defence as praying *Elijah*, who is therefore called the chariots of *Israel* and the horsemen thereof. If any thing prevent the ruin of a sinful people it's this. These stand in the gap and make up the breach, at which otherwise our mercies would be let out, and God's judgments come in: these prevail for the continuance of those forfeited mercies, and the averting deserved judgments.

Happy the land, and blessed the people, that are favoured with men of this spirit. These are publick blessings, a common good; the stay and support of the general interest. The remnant of *Jacob* shall be, as dew from the Lord in the midst of many people. These shall be the cause of a decayed nation's flourishing. *When the Lord has removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the land, in it shall be a tenth; and it shall return and be eaten as a teil tree, and an oak whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance (a).* A text very obscure and hard to

(a) Isa. 6. 12, 13. The reason of God's sparing them, when they deserv'd to be utterly destroy'd, was the respect he had to a remnant among them call'd the godly seed. This is explained by a familiar similitude, plac'd before their eyes. The word which we render [*when they cast*] i. e. their leaves, which the *Chaldee* and we so supply; for those words are not in the original. This word is *Shallecheth*; the name of a gate, as you see, 1 Chr. 26. 16. To Shuppim and Hosa the Lot came forth Westward, with the gate *Shallecheth*. To this gate there was a causeway or cast up ground, planted on each side with elms and oaks: now says the prophet, as these trees were the preservation and security of the high way to the gate of the temple, and kept it from mouldering away, so the small number of religious persons, a remnant among them in the land, are the strength and security of the Nation, which would otherwise sink into ruin.

be understood; of which there are therefore various opinions. This seems in general to be the sense of the words; that a number of religious, praying people, are the stay and support of the publick interest, and help to keep things together, that all may not run to ruin. These are the substance, the consistency, and firmness thereof. *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it (a).*

II. We are now to shew upon what accounts this is so desirable, and the reasons there are for our concern to obtain it.

There's no need to dwell upon this: the thing is so obvious in itself, that every one must easily apprehend it. I shall therefore observe in a few things, briefly.

I. That this is our truest and only happiness: it takes in all that's necessary and essential to it. Religion here begins at home; we have first a charity for our own souls; and are not so much keepers of others vineyards, as not to keep our own, nor so solicitous for the good of others, as to neglect our selves. Like some people that mind any bodie's business rather than their own: but then our religion, tho' it begins at home, no more ends there than our charity should, but is carried into our families, into our country, into the world, and the several parts of it. We are not so thoughtful about our selves, as not to look abroad and consider what may be done for others: but having secured our own interest and personal happiness, we then stretch our cares far and wide to others. And this carries in it all that's good and desirable, and compleats a man's happiness. This is to be blessed indeed. Some may be useful to others, and not blessed themselves; others may be blessed themselves, and yet no great blessings to the world

(a) Isa. 15. 8.

or the church of God, tho' no good man is altogether uselefs; but to be blessed and a blessing compleats a man's happiness.

2. This is our highest honour, it makes a man truly great, for it makes him really godlike and divine. Indeed nothing brings us to so near a resemblance of the ever blessed God, whose character is, *thou art good, and doest good* (a). That's the glory of the divine being: and for us to be blessed and made a blessing, to be good, and do good, makes us as like unto God himself as it's possible for a creature to be.

And is there, can there be any thing so desirable as to resemble God himself and imitate our heavenly Father? this compleats a man's character, and is the highest dignity we can be advanced unto. What was it that made *Jabez* more honourable than his brethren, as we are told he was? not his great riches and wealth, his valour and power, but his piety and devotion to God, and his usefulness to others.

A wise man will not value himself merely or chiefly upon the honour of his family, the largeness of his estate, the dignity of his post, and splendor of his equipage, but his usefulness to the world, and the good he does his country.

3. This will be a singular pleasure and satisfaction to our own minds, and administer to us comfort living and dying. The pleasure arising to our selves from the reflection is unconceivable; what a satisfaction to think, we han't been careless of our own salvation, nor neglected the duties we owe to others? Tho' we have nothing to boast of, and in many things come short, yet thro' the grace of God, we han't been altogether uselefs in the world, but done some good in our day and

(a) Psal. 119. 68,

place; others have had our best wishes and endeavours, our families, our country, and especially the church of God; we have not lived for, and only to our selves.

4. This will give us the good wishes of men; but, which is infinitely more, we shall have the approbation of God himself.

If we are a blessing to others, we shall be blessed our selves; vertue and piety challenge respect from all men; but they that are not only good themselves but do a great deal of good to others, are worthy of double honour.

Job says, the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him. *Mordecai* was accepted of the multitude of his brethren, and had the good word of all whose good word was worth having; because he sought the welfare of his people, and spoke peace to all his seed (a). *Demetrius* was well reported of all men (b). Every one had a good word for him. Such persons as these are the darlings of their country; the delight of mankind. They have the hearts and affections, the prayers and good wishes of others: are beloved and admired of all. No one can lightly speak ill of them. Many a good word they have to say of them, many a hearty prayer they put up for them; the Lord bleſs them; they are good men, and do a great deal of good; often have we been refreshed by them, for such a man one would even dare to die, which is the highest elevation of a man's love; and rises to such a proportion towards men eminently useful, that they think such a life, as the people told *David*, is worth ten thousand of theirs. These men go off the stage with honour, and die as much lamented, as they lived desired.

(a) *Esther* 10. 3.

(b) *Eph.* 3.

John 12.

Whereas how stinging and ungrateful to fall under, and that justly, the general reproach of others; to have them curse our names and memory, and hear from them such language as this, He is a good for nothing creature, he lives for no body but himself; hardly ever did a handsome generous thing in his life; the world has no good of him while he lives, and will have no miss of him when he dies! Let him go like a miser as he is: A self-lover, a self-seeker; all his cares and views are shrunk up into the narrow compass of his little self. Tho' this to a sordid mind may give but little uneasiness, let the people hiss him, he applauds himself, having his money in his chest, it would be a cutting thing to others.

But this is a small matter, compared with that far greater satisfaction which must arise from the hopes and thoughts of our being accepted and approved of God. *Remember me, O my God, for good,* says *Nehemiah*: whatever others do, don't thou forget me; whatever constructions they put upon my actions, may I hear thee say, *well done, good and faithful servant*. And we are sure he is not unrighteous to forget such labours of love, when he sets a value upon a cup of cold water, and reckons the least kindness done to his disciples, as done to himself. And tho' this is far from being meritorious of the reward, yet when he comes graciously to bestow it, he makes mention of these things to their honour; saying to those on his right hand, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you; for I was, in my members, hungry and ye gave me meat, thirsty and ye gave me drink, sick and in prison and ye visited me*.

III. I shall now make a short improvement of the whole, in the two or three following reflections.

I. Then the contrary to this must be a sore and dreadful judgment; a thing most inglorious and

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dishonourable, when men either are not blessed themselves, or not blessings to others; but above all, if they are neither of these.

Some, instead of being blessed, are under a curse, for they are under the law. The wrath of God abides upon them, because they believe not on him whom he hath sent. The curse of God enters into all they have and all they do, into their persons, enjoyments, basket and store. *The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked (a). God curses their blessings (b). Cursed in the city, and in the field, cursed shall be thy basket and thy store, cursed when they come in and go out (c).* Their persons are hateful, and their sacrifices an abomination to God, wretched case, miserable creatures! without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. And then they are not blessings; but on the contrary they are at best

Useless persons, and unprofitable; of no manner of significancy in the world. They serve only to fill up a space; are born for nothing but to consume the fruits of the earth. They live only to eat, drink and sleep; things that might be done and are done by creatures of much less dignity than those, distinguished from others by the faculty of reason. These do but cumber the ground, and take up the room of those that might be of service to the world, while they do no good themselves. They stand all the day idle, as if the world was only a hive for drones. They live to themselves and for nobody else. Their whole lives are filled up with the most inconsiderable actions; so that there will be no traces left behind of their appearance in the world; but as soon as gone, they are forgotten, as if they had never been. But this is not all, they are not only unprofitable, but hurt-

(a) Prov. 3. 33. (b) Mal. 2. 2. (c) Deut. 28. 16, 17. &c.

ful. So far from being a blessing and doing good, they do great mischief in the world. One sinner destroys much good. They sin themselves. The earth groans under the load of their guilt: the sun blushes at the sight of their crimes. The heavens are astonished at their horrible prophane-ness and impiety. They carry fuel to the flames, and heat the furnace seven times hotter. These do nothing to extinguish the fire of God's wrath, but a great deal to augment it. But neither is this all, they do not only sin themselves, but they make others to sin. This was the brand fixed upon *Jeroboam*, that he did not only sin himself, but he made *Israel* to sin: we meet with it oftentimes, and particularly in one chapter, where this is still the cry, *He departed not from the sins of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin* (a). The same thing is repeated in each of these verses; and a worse character no man can have. He sinned himself by setting up a false worship; making the calves, and by his example and persuasion, or authority, made others to sin in worshipping them. He was principal in his own sins, and accessory in the sins of others. Such mischief many do in the world, others learn of them to be profane and wicked; to swear and curse, to lie, to steal, to be drunk, to contemn God and his worship, despise religion, and make a mock of sin, and a jest of the scriptures. These enemies of all righteousness don't cease to pervert the right way of the Lord; and seek to turn others from the faith, and entice them to all that's evil; so that they will have reason to curse the day in which they ever saw their faces. This is the contemptible character of many in the world; so far from being blessed and made a blessing, they are the pests of the earth; the plague of mankind;

(a) 1 Kings 15. 9, 11, 24, 28.

like the devil being destroyed themselves, seek continually to devour others. They do great mischief wherever they come by their examples, or by their subtilty and persuasions; these are a curse to their families, the grief and exercise of all good men; as they contribute to the wickedness of the world, help to fill up the ephah, and compleat the measure of a nation's guilt.

2. This gives occasion for self reflections. Let us from hence examine our selves, and consider what part we have hitherto acted upon the stage of the world. God has spared us another year, in the space of which near thirty thousand souls are gone into eternity in this city, and the parts adjacent. Now what has been the course of our actions the year that's past? have we been well employed, or stood idle another year? the Lord has let us alone this year also; should he now come seeking fruit, would he find any thing more than leaves? have we been blessings to the world, to the church of God, to our families? or, have we only cumbred the ground, and brought forth no fruit? what use have we made of our talents, our times, our seasons and opportunities? what good have we done with our estates? what use have we been of in the world, to our country, to our families, and to the church of God? what have we done for God? have we endeavoured to promote his honour and interest in the world? if not, then let us consider with our selves, was it worth while to come into the world, to live in it as we have done? is this suitable to a reasonable being? what figure will it make among those we leave behind? is it honourable now? will it turn to account and be comfortable hereafter? the Lord pardon our unprofitableness for the time past, and enlarge our desires for service the rest of those few days we may have to live in the world! and
may

may the good Lord graciously accept whatever we have endeavoured and designed for his glory, and others good.

3. Then see what manner of persons we ought to be. *Abraham* was blessed and a blessing, so should we endeavour to be in our several stations, and according to our different capacities. I conclude therefore with that patriarchal wish, *God give you the blessing of Abraham* (a). Nothing greater can we desire for our selves, for ours, and for one another. Oh! that thou wouldst, as *Jabez* prayed, bless me indeed; that is, bless me, and make me a blessing. We are not born for our selves, but the publick, and should endeavour to be a common good. There's no one member in the natural body but hath its proper function for the good of the whole: tho' it be not an eye, or a hand. Every servant in God's house has his talent, and ought to occupy them, whether they be five, or two, or one. No man has a privilege to be idle, and live upon the labours of others; but is obliged to do what good he can, whether in a higher or lower sphere of activity. This will be beneficial to others, comfortable to our selves, and, above all, will be pleasing to God. If we have been fruitful in every good word and work, and served the Lord Christ and the souls of men in our different station, we shall lie down in the grave with honour, and go off the stage, not only with the applause of men, but with the euge of God himself, saying, *Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. You have been blessed and a blessing to many in your day; you have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, relieved the prisoner;*

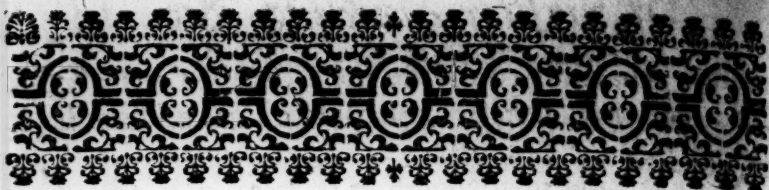
(a) Gen. 28. 4.

and made a Blessing. 283

come, ye blessed souls, blessed of men, but above all, blessed of my Father; blessed in time, and blessed to eternity; come take possession of all that glory and happiness, designed for you in my Father's eternal counsel, and purchased for you by my dearest blood. *Which God grant may be the happy portion of us all, for Christ his sake, to whom with the Father, and the holy ghost be ascribed, as is most due, all might, majesty, and dominion both now and for evermore, Amen.*



Of



*Of rightly dividing the Word of
Truth.*

A
S E R M O N
P R E A C H ' D at the setting apart the
Reverend Mr. HURRION,
TO THE
O F F I C E *and* W O R K of a
P A S T O R in Mr. N E S B I T ' S
Church, 1724.

2 TIM. ii. 15.

*Study to shew thy self approved unto God, a workman,
that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the
word of truth.*



M A K E no apology for the choice of
this subject ; only wish, at the conclusi-
on, you may not think the management
of it stands in need of one. The text
is suited to the occasion, if the discourse does but
answer the text; and whilst I am endeavouring
to

Of rightly dividing, &c. 285

to shew what it is to divide the word of truth aright; I do not my self, in the performance, handle it amiss.

We are now met together to pray for a blessing upon the ministry of our worthy and beloved brother (a), called under the sad dispensation upon this Church, to watch over you in the Lord; being sensible, whoever plants, and whoever waters, the increase of all must come from God.

It is no uncommon thing for pastors to be called off from their work by death, and others to enter upon their labours: but here is a successor before a demise, in the life time of your minister, the necessity of the case so requiring, he having been for many months rendred altogether incapable of performing any part of his ministerial office; and there being but little prospect he should ever be restored to his former usefulness.

The providence you are under is indeed dark and melancholy, but not altogether without it's bright side: your minister it is true is smitten, but not unto death; this leaves room for faith and prayer: you are a church not divided and rent in pieces, but happily united among your selves, and now comfortably provided for, and settled again; having one to go in and out before you, under whose ministry you may expect to find pasture for your souls.

Here is another minister to feed this people; and another people for this minister to feed; and upon such a change (shall I call it a translation?) what can be more agreeable and becoming, than humbly to implore the divine blessing both upon minister and people, now entered into this new relation one to another? With prayer it has been thought proper to join the word, that one may

(a) *Mr. John Hurrian.*

help

help on, and assist the other; this province, at your desire, I have engaged in; wherein I shall be so far from taking upon me to be a dictator to any, that I shall not pretend to be so much as an instructor to many of you; only, since you have called me to this service, you will allow me to be your remembrancer, while I endeavour to state, what I apprehend to be of great concernment, the right dividing the word of truth, which I shall attempt in the opening this apostolical exhortation to *Timothy*; *study to shew thy self approved unto God, &c.* From whence I observe,

Obs. 1. That the gospel is the word of truth. That this is a periphrasis of the gospel none can doubt; if any could, that passage of the same apostle would soon satisfy them, *After that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation* (a). An high encomium of the glorious gospel, wherein there are two things, that more especially recommend it to us; the goodness of it, it is the gospel of our salvation; and the certainty of it, it is the word of truth. It brings glad tidings of great joy to a lost world, and makes the noblest discoveries to creatures, benighted and involved in the thickest darkness; and to our comfort, the news it brings us is as true as it is good; and the discoveries it makes are no less certain, than they are glorious.

The gospel teaches us the greatest truths, that ever were, or ever will be delivered to man. It hath nothing in it that is mean and trifling, but contains things of the utmost importance in themselves, and which it nearly concerns us to know and believe. And it propounds nothing to be believed by us, but what is truth, it being really all that it pretends to be; the word of him that is truth it self. It is no human artifice, nor a cunningly

(a) Eph. 1. 13.

ningly devised fable of any man, or set of men whatsoever; but these are the true sayings of God. The apostles boldly asserted this, and always stood to it, *We have not followed cunningly devised fables, &c. prophesy of old time came not by the will of man, but holy men of God, spake as they were moved by the holy ghost* (a). No man had wisdom enough to devise it, how knowing soever he might be in other respects; it far transcended the utmost of his capacity to make such discoveries, as we meet with in the gospel. Besides, were he ever so able, it could not come by the will of man; not of a bad man, because the whole System is one continued opposition to his own lusts; not of a good man, for such a forgery would be a downright contradiction to his character. It must then come from God: and as it is a possible thing for him to make such a revelation, it is highly reasonable to suppose (all things considered) he would do so; and that indeed he hath done so.

It has moreover all the evidences, which can reasonably be desired, that it is indeed from God. It hath been confirmed by the most unquestionable and surprizing miracles; which were all well attested, being done openly in the face of the sun, and the view of all, for truth seeks no corners. These were numerous and well adjusted, to serve some necessary and valuable end, either as a just punishment of some mens wilful impenitency, or vile and disguised hypocrisie (b). Which yet were but rare, they being generally such as were useful and beneficial to mankind. Whereas the stories of others feats, and particularly of *Appollonius Tyanæus*, the *Pythagorean* wanderer, whom some would at least equal with Christ, and set up as his rival, were no better than the ludicrous or

(a) 2 Pet. 1. 16, 21.

(b) Matth. 7. 32. Acts 5. 5.

impious

impious pranks of a crafty magician, if they had indeed any thing in them at all.

But above all, this word has all internal tokens and characters of divinity. What ever had such an appearance of truth? such impressions of beauty, wisdom and majesty? did any thing ever make such discoveries, or gain such conquests? what was ever so much opposed, and yet so much succeeded? We conclude then, that this is nothing less than the product of God's counsel and wisdom. It is called the everlasting gospel; and well it may, for it comes from the everlasting God; and if God be its author, we are sure it is a word of truth.

It is therefore to be feared, that they who despise the sacred scriptures, decry and run down the gospel as folly and imposture; which not only some men of learning have done, but now a days, affecting to be thought fashionable, and men of sense, even some of the meaner and more inferior sort of persons take upon them to do, and laugh at those for fools, that believe their bibles; it is to be feared, I say, that either they don't read them at all; or if they do, it is under a strong bias the wrong way, and they would be thought not to believe them to be true, only because they would not have them to be so; for if they are, woe to such wretched scepticks and unbelievers.

This then is the glory of the gospel; it is a word of truth, and of all others, they that preach it, are concerned to believe it to be so, lest while they proclaim it to the world as heralds, they should be no better than hawkers, that cry news about the streets, to whom it is all one whether it be true or false, so they can but make their advantage of it.

Obs. 2. This word of truth is to be divided, and consequently there must be some, whose more immediate and proper work it is to do it; *study*

to shew thy self a workman, rightly dividing the word. It must be divided; there is a necessity of it; the people need it, and have always done so. It should be explained, confirmed and applied, that is, divided. The apostle supposes this, and takes it for granted; and as there is need it should be divided, God calls and employs some men more especially in the doing of it; upon whom he bestows necessary gifts and graces severally as he pleases to furnish them for this work. Study, says the apostle to Timothy, herein to shew thy self a workman; it is thy work and business, as it is of all others put into the ministry, to divide the word.

Obs. 3. This word of truth ought to be rightly divided. It should be the care and endeavour, as it is the duty of those that divide the word, to do it aright. Study to shew thy self a workman, &c. rightly dividing the word of truth. In speaking to this, I shall endeavour,

- I. To shew what it is to divide the word aright.
- II. The reasons there are for doing so.
- III. Apply it in a few things to ministers and people.

First, We are to shew what it is to divide the word aright. Ministers are workmen; as such they have a work to do; and that is, to divide and handle the word, to distribute the bread of life, to dispense the gospel. This being their work, it is their concern to do it well, strictly according to the original, (a) *cutting the word aright*. This, as most think, is a metaphor taken from sacrifices, in which the priests that cut the beast up, did, or should accurately distinguish between the parts offered to God, and those that belonged to them-

(a) ὀφειόμενα.

selves, or to the persons that brought the offering, that every one might have their proper share; or thus, the priests were to take care in dividing the sacrifices which were laid on God's altar, to cut off and lay aside those parts which were not to be offered, and to sever them from those that were. Some have thought this is taken from parents, and fathers of a family, or stewards and masters of an household, who distribute food to every one under their care, and cut it out as they need, knowing, that which is too much for one, may hardly be enough for another. Many thoughts and debates there are about this matter, when it is applied to preaching. I shall freely give you my own thereon, and endeavour impartially to state what I apprehend is right preaching, or dividing the word aright.

I conceive, a regard is here to be had to the word it self, to the persons concerned therein, to the times and seasons in which it is dispensed, and also to the manner of handling it; and if so, then rightly to divide the word, is

To give every text its true and genuine sense; every truth its due weight, and every person their proper portion, and to suit the word to its particular season; and lastly, to handle it in a way that becomes it.

I. To divide the word aright, is to give every text its strict and proper meaning, so far as we have light into the mind of the holy Ghost, and do our selves understand it. Our business is not to contrive and invent a new gospel, but to open and unfold that which we have. We are here, it must be confessed, in an imperfect state, and at the best see but darkly, and know but in part; it becomes us therefore to be cautious and modest in our decisions, since after all our search and enquiry, it is possible we may not hit upon the true sense of
some

some obscure and difficult texts of scriptures; but seeing one part of handling the word is interpretation, and giving the sense of scripture, we ought, upon a diligent enquiry, and after having well considered the context and coherence, the scope and design of the place, and compared one scripture with another, according to the best of our knowledge, give every text its proper sense and meaning. Allusions may be, and often are made; but to interpret scripture merely by the sound of words, is playing with our bibles, and trifling in the preacher, and serves only to impose upon the people, as it induces them to think the text speaks, what it never intended. What we offer from a particular portion of scripture, should come freely in, and not be forced into the service. It should not only be true in itself, but the truth of the place; not only good fruit, but the fruit which grows upon that tree. This is keeping close to a text, and handling the word aright.

II. Rightly to divide the word, is to give every truth its due weight, so that no necessary things, and profitable to be known, are wholly omitted, and yet the more essential and important truths are chiefly attended to and regarded.

To divide the word aright, is to take care that no necessary truth be wholly neglected and passed over. The apostle *Paul* was not long at *Ephesus*, about three years in all (a), and yet at parting, he tells the elders, and appeals to them for the truth of it; *That he kept nothing back that was profitable for them; nor had shunned to declare unto them, the whole counsel of God* (b). It cannot sure be called dividing the word aright, when some things necessary to be known, and useful in their kind are hardly ever insisted on in the whole course of our

(a) Acts 20. 31.

(b) Acts 20. 27, 27.

ministry. A faithful preacher would with-hold nothing from those committed to his charge, which belongs to their edification, but declare the whole counsel of God, and, at times, speak to every truth as near as he can, and so far as he hath attained.

We often hear of gospel preaching, and true gospel preachers; but with some persons, this is only preaching one part of the word, wherein if you discharge your selves well, you will not fail of their good opinion; but should you take in the whole compass of the gospel, change your voice, and press the duties of religion, as well as preach its doctrines, there is some danger this should be pronounced, preaching works, and that by which they can't edify. I wish there was no cause for any complaint upon this account; you'll bear with me when I express my fears, lest among some of us there is too much a fault in this matter. Would to God all the ministers of Christ were more led into the study, knowledge and preaching of Christ, and did determine as the apostle *Paul* did among the *Corinthians*, not to know any thing, so much as, to know nothing compared with Christ and him crucified. Evangelical, gospel preachers, truly so, are sure the best preachers, and most likely to do good to the souls of men. But then the question is, who are these gospel preachers? and what gospel preaching is? There is a legal way of preaching the gospel; and, my friends, there is an evangelical way of preaching the law. He is the true gospel preacher, and divides the word aright, that takes in the whole counsel of God, law and gospel, grace and duty, doctrine and practice, faith and repentance, that tells men what Christ hath done and suffered in order to their salvation; and then, what he requires of them, and promises to them on their parts in order to it. I have my self been told by
some

some, that if persons would hear discourses of faith and grace, they must worship in places of such a denomination; if they desire to hear a discourse of works and morality, they must repair to such a place of worship; but I don't know, why both these may not be heard in one and the same place, sure I am, they should, and I hope they are.

The law is of use in the hand of the spirit, to give men the knowledge and a conviction of sin. This having made the wound, or discovered it, the gospel reveals a Saviour, and propounds the remedy. The one makes men sinners of sense, and the other, of hope. The awful thunders of the law, may be of service to awaken secure sinners, as the great and precious promises of the gospel are designed to relieve and comfort the trembling soul.

Grace and duty, faith, repentance and works, are all necessary in their place. The apostles preaching turned upon these two grand points, *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ* (a). And having brought men to repent and believe, he will have this *constantly affirmed, that they be careful to maintain good works* (b). We are not always to insist only on one of these, that we should hardly ever hear from some any thing but faith, or from others any thing but works; both have their use in religion, and ought to have a place in our ministry.

Doctrines and practice will also have their place; if we handle the word aright. Men are to be told what they are to believe, and what they are to do. For this purpose the doctrines of christianity are to be explained and cleared up, proved and vindicated, that persons may have just notions in religion; but then, lest they should be mere notionalists,

(a) Acts 20. 21.

(b) Tit. 2. 8.

the duties of religion are to be built upon these, and warmly pressed from them. The end of theorems and principles is practice. We should be careful to lay a good foundation in doctrinal truths, that moral duties may be urged upon right principles, and by the strongest and most forcible arguments, else our exhortations thereunto will be weak and enervous; and how earnest soever we may be in them, there will ever be more noise than substance; but having laid this foundation in doctrinal truths, we may hope successfully to build thereon in a practical application. This, we may observe, was the apostle's method in almost all his epistles; he largely handles the great and substantial doctrines of christianity, and then improves them in exhortations to practical godliness.

This is to divide the word aright, to give every truth its place, and keep back nothing that is profitable, but so far as we know, to declare the whole counsel of God. But then, though nothing that's necessary to be known should be entirely suppressed, yet

The more essential and important truths, are principally to be attended to, and insisted on. Every thing in christianity is precious and excellent; but some things are of greater excellency, and more extensive usefulness than others, and ought therefore principally to be regarded; such as most immediately tend to the renewing our natures; the bettering our minds and manners; are reducible to practice; that refer more directly to our last end; are essential to our present comfort, and future happiness; these and the like are things we ought to be taken up in the daily use of.

Some things are preached in order to others; they make way for, and are introductive to them.

Some are external only, and circumstantial, and comparatively of far less moment than many others.

It is easy to say in such cases where the stress is to be laid. The kingdom of God doth not consist in meat, drink, days, garbs, outward rites, and customs, &c. There is less danger from any failure, or mistake in these things, than those that enter into the vitals of religion. So as to the nature and form of a church, its officers and discipline, we may apply the words of our Saviour, *These ought you not to have left undone*; but then there are other things, which you ought more especially to have regarded; the much weightier matters of the gospel. Then we are to preach Christ; make him the alpha and omega of our ministry. His name should triumph in all our sermons, since he is the way, the truth, and the life; and there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. It was the apostle's resolution to preach Christ, among the *Corinthians*, and nothing but Christ, or however nothing so much as Christ, nothing compared with him, nothing but what was derived from him, or might be reduced to him, and as Christ, so him crucified; he was not ashamed of his cross, but gloried in it. His life, death, resurrection and intercession; the things he has done, suffered and purchased; these were the great subject of his discourses. *We preach not our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.*

To which succeeds the work of the spirit and the grace of God, in making an effectual application of Christ, and his purchased benefits to the souls of men, which leads to the great doctrines of faith, repentance, the divine birth, the new creature, effectual calling, sanctification and holiness, as things without which no man can be saved; here should our zeal chiefly spend it self. And thus to lay the stress where it ought to be laid, is to divide the word aright.

III. To divide the word aright, is to give every person their proper portion, cutting out the word

of truth so prudently, that as near as may be, none may have any just cause to complain they are neglected in this daily ministration.

The general division of persons is into righteous and wicked, saints and sinners, and a due regard is to be had to each of these, speaking terror to whom terror, and comfort to whom comfort belongs. We are not always to preach as if we had none but converted persons in our assemblies, and such as in our Saviour's sense need no repentance: nor on the other hand, as if there were none but did need it. Some are Christ's sheep, but not yet gathered into his fold. Regard is to be had to these that they may be brought in; and in order to it, among these, of some we are to have compassion, making a difference; others are to be saved with fear, plucking them out of the fire, awaking their consciences by the terrors of the law, and then allure them by the promises of the gospel. Shew them their sin, set before them their duty, warn them of their danger, and beseech them to fly from the wrath to come, and to be reconciled to God; in a word, knowing the terror of the Lord, and constrained by his love, intreat, persuade, and even compel them to come in.

And as these are to be brought in, others are to be edified and built up. And here it is the minister's wisdom well to consider, what the condition of his hearers requires, and their capacities will allow; that he may distribute the bread of life accordingly, and so accomodate himself to the state of his hearers, that each one may have their portion. These are of several ranks, and under very different circumstances. The apostle *John* speaks of *little children, young men, and fathers (a)*; and he writes to them all, he has something to say to

(a) 1 John 2. 12, 13.

each of them. Some are weak and ignorant like babes and children, these must be fed with milk; plain and obvious truths, like that food, which is easy of digestion. I have, says the apostle, to these *Corinthians, fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, nor yet are you able* (a). Others are strong, and these should be fed with meat, more solid and substantial food, that they may be carried on to perfection, and gradually trained up to a greater and more extensive degree of light and understanding in the things of God. *Strong meat belongs to them that are of full age* (b). Tho' it should be far from us to neglect the plain and easy lessons of morality, yet we are not wholly to content our selves with these, but in dispensing the word, we are to give the greatest diligence to attend unto the more sublime and glorious mysteries of the gospel; the person, offices and grace of Jesus Christ, as those wherein the glory of God, and our own obedience are most eminently concerned. From plain and easy things, we should proceed to those that are more mature, and fit for christians of a riper age (b).

Again, some are fluctuating and unstable; these wavering souls are to be settled and established; some wander and go astray; those are to be reduced and brought back again. The sloathful and dull of hearing are to be stirred up and quickened to their duty, by the words of the masters of assemblies, which are that to the souls of men, which goads are to the sluggish animal. The backsliders and secure are to be threatned, that they may be awakened out of their slumber, being told they shall be filled with their own ways; if they live after the flesh they shall die; let them there-

(a) 1 Cor. 2. 2. (b) Heb. 5. 14. (c) Heb. 6. 1.

fore consider whence they are fallen, repent and do their first works.

Some, again are bruised reeds and smoking flax; disconsolate souls, cast down and disquieted; weary and heavy laden, under a sense of guilt and sorrow: they are tempted or deserted; to these weary souls a word is to be spoke that is suited to their case, which tends to resolve their doubts, and comfort them under all their sorrows. On the other hand, some joy in the Lord, and are filled with the consolations of God; these are to be cautioned against high-mindedness, and bid to rejoice with trembling.

Thus to speak to all parts of the word, and all sorts of persons, doctrines, precepts, promises, threatnings, for conviction and comfort, to saints and sinners, weak and strong, giving every one their portion, as their capacities will allow, and their circumstances require, this is to divide the word aright.

IV. To handle the word rightly, is to deliver the truths thereof in their proper time and season. God hath made every thing beautiful in its time; and to every thing there is a season. Cold is seasonable in winter, as heat is in summer; and either of these in any considerable degree in the different times we reckon unseasonable, as snow in summer, and rain in harvest (a).

Some truths are never out of season, but some things are more proper for one season than another. Every truth is not fit for every time, nor will it suit all occasions. Now that is rightly spoke, that is seasonably spoke. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done for want of being well timed; whereas *a word in sea-*

(a) Prov. 26. 1.

son how good is it? (a). How much good does it do? counsel or comfort given in the fit time is highly acceptable and useful. There are many things good in themselves, but as *Hushai* said of *Achitophel's* counsel, they are not so good at such a time, or season; but *a word fitly spoken*, upon its wheels, that runs smoothly, hits the case, the time, the occasion and circumstances of persons and things, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver, as pleasing to the ear, as they were to the eye (b). To give times and seasons unto especial truths and doctrines, is committed to his prudence, who is called to feed the church of God. *Who then is that faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them their meat in due season* (c). He must have the tongue of the learned that knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. For the matter of it, when it is proper and fit (d).

To handle then the word aright, is to bring out of the treasure of scripture those things that suit the present age in general, or any person's case in particular.

A respect herein is to be had to the present age, and so the errors of the day are to be confuted, and the present truths, such as are more especially struck at, are to be contended for and vindicated. To declaim against old error and antiquated heresies, long since buried in the grave of silence, is to fight with ghosts, and challenge the dead. This is to amuse and confound people with things they would else never have heard of, and better it would be they never had.

The sins also of the present times are to be exposed and reprov'd. There are some things sea-

(a) Prov. 15. 23. (b) Prov. 25. 11. (c) Matth. 24. 45.
(d) Isai. 50. 4.

sonable in such a particular juncture, to such places and persons. The apostle *Paul* shewed his great wisdom in observing this rule. *Athens* was a city wholly given to idolatry and superstition; you might as easily find an idol as a man, for they were full of idols. The apostle coming amongst them suits his discourse to the place and people; *I perceive*, says he, *that in all things you are too superstitious*; and since they had an altar to the unknown God, *whom they ignorantly worship*, he would declare unto them, *God that made the world and all things therein, seeing he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with mens hands: we ought not to think the Godhead is like to gold and silver, or stone graven by art and man's device*; with much more to this purpose, than which nothing can be more seasonable, considering the place where, and the people among whom he was at this time (a). In like manner, when the apostle was at *Ephesus*, we don't find he directly spoke against, and reviled their Goddesses *Diana*. The town-clerk cleared him of this imputation, when he told the people, to appease them, *These men are not robbers of churches, nor blasphemers of your goddesses* (b). He did not upbraid them with their idolatry, nor rail against their beloved, adored *Diana*, that might have exasperated them; but as one that must declare the whole counsel of God, he preached the truth among them, and plainly told them, they were no Gods which were made by hands. Nor could the divine essence be represented by corporeal things, which was a word in season, suited to the place and people (c).

A regard herein is also to be had to particular persons. The apostle *Paul* shewed his great wisdom and skill in this also, when he was called to preach

(a) Acts 17.

(b) Acts 19. 37.

(c) Acts 19. 16.

unto *Felix*, and his wife *Drusilla*, they heard him concerning the faith; but being well acquainted with their character, he lays hold of that opportunity, without naming the persons, to reprove their vices: and he reasoned with them of righteousness and temperance, things they were most eminently defective in, and utter strangers to. He endeavours also to terrify and awaken their consciences, by the severe menaces of a judgment to come, when they and all men should be called to a strict account of all they had done in the body. These were necessary and seasonable truths, considering the persons he had then to deal with.

The word is also to be delivered, so as to suit particular occasions, providences and circumstances of time, &c. As fasting and prayer on such an occasion as this, that hath now brought us together; or thanksgiving for some national, or family, or personal mercies and deliverances. There are truths that suit the several ages of men, youth and elder persons. Circumstances; and these outward; such as plenty or poverty, prosperity and adversity: inward, occasioned by Satan's temptation, or divine desertions. Some things there are more especially suited to these; and he handles the word aright, that endeavours as much as may be, to fit his discourses hereunto.

V. To handle the word aright is, to deliver it in a proper manner, and in such a way, as becomes the holy and divine oracles. *If any man speak*, (it is the apostle *Peter's* direction) *let him speak as becomes the oracles of God* (a). He does not mean the outward gesture and manner of his delivery; (though some regard should be had to that too) but he intends the matter spoken, and then the manner of speaking; the oracles of God themselves

(a) 1 Pet. 4. 2.

for the matter, and as becomes them for the manner; that is with great faithfulness, as those that dare not accomodate themselves to the humours, fancies, and passions of men, nor study to please them, for then they would not be the servants of Christ. With all plainness and clearness; not with the excellency of speech and enticing words of man's wisdom, neat and trim phrases, puerile flourishes, or high flown expressions. But then this is to be done with words of wisdom, that though we are rude in speech, the truth may not be exposed to contempt by any uncouth, and indecent expressions, which tempt people to despise what they ought to have in the highest veneration, and provoke them to laugh, at a time and in a place, where, of all things, our business is to make them serious; for we are to distinguish between a gawdry of phrases, and a decency of words. Again, to speak as the oracles of God is,

To speak intelligibly and condescendingly, that the meanest capacity may take in and understand what is said. Some persons, like cannon mounted too high, shoot over peoples heads, get into the clouds and soar so high, that they lose their hearers, and perhaps themselves too. It is easy to amuse the vulgar with some abstruse speculations, and high flown notions, with an affected height of eloquence and learning, with swelling words of vanity, that have no fixed nor determinate ideas. These often admire what they really don't understand; but it is wrong to attempt it, since it only feeds a man's vanity, and gratifies the people's itching ears, but will never savingly profit them.

To conclude this head, to handle the word aright is, to deliver it with that warmth, holy zeal and fervor, that gravity and seriousness, that meekness and gentleness, and yet with that boldness and authority,

thority, with such evidence and demonstration, as every way becomes the sacred oracles.

I come now in the next place

Secondly, To give the reasons of this, and shew why it ought to be the care of those that divide the word, to do it aright.

I. The first reason is taken from the word itself, which is to be divided. There ought to be this care, because it is that which God himself is the author of, and hath a peculiar interest in. This word of truth is the word of God: it comes from the love, the kindness and wisdom of God; it is a revelation of the mind and will of God; it is a dispensation of the grace and favour of God; it is an act of the Father's supreme sovereign authority, and justly claims our highest reverence. We ought to shew a great regard to it, and be very careful in the handling it. Should we corrupt this word, dash it, mingle with it our own inventions, pride, passions, wrest and pervert it, so as to make it serve our own purposes; should we discern and mutilate it; should we in these, or any other criminal instances, handle it deceitfully; what must we be liable to, when we consider whose word it is, and the strict regards that are owing to it? This had a great influence upon the apostle in the exercise of his ministry; and no small comfort was it to him, to be able to say as he doth, *We are not as many who corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity; but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ (a)*. And again, *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending our selves to every man's conscience (b)*. If any did corrupt the word of God, and handle it deceitfully, he never could come into their measures, but approved himself faithful to him whose

(a) 2 Cor. 11. 17.

(b) 2 Cor. 4. 2.

word it was, and who had put him in trust with the gospel.

II. Another reason is taken from the persons among whom the word is to be divided ; it ought to be done aright, because this is the most likely way to answer the end of the ministry upon the souls of men. When the word is so divided, that sometimes one sort of food is cut out, and sometimes another, the whole household will then be served, and every one have this proper portion, which is the duty, and will be the satisfaction of every faithful steward. We then reach every person, and as near as may be every case, not always feeding one sort of hearers, whilst others are neglected and starved. We are not always to dwell upon one theme, as if all men had the same taste and relish, or the same capacities and apprehensions, and there were not a variety of cases to be considered by us, as there is a diversity of gifts for that end bestowed by Christ. All sorts of food are not alike to all men : that may be very agreeable to one, which is not so to another. Some are pleased with the rousing awakening words of a *Boanerges*, when others are more taken with the soft and gentle streins of a *Barnabas*. Nothing works upon them, and insinuates itself into their minds, like the soft streins of the gospel, the love of Christ, and the mercy of God. Some like a rhetorical way of preaching, which strikes their passions, and warms their affections, when others are better pleased with a logical, rational and argumentative way, as that which informs their judgment, and enlarges their understanding. Now when the word is rightly divided, all these are likely to be served. Where the design rises no higher than to reach the affections, without informing the judgment, and possessing the mind with a due sense of the weight and reason of things, it mostly proves evanid : and much zeal
and

and heat, with little knowledge, will make very uncomfortable members of a religious society: on the other hand, when our endeavour is not only to speak to the passions of men, and get into their affections, but to let light into their understandings, they become not only warm and lively, but intelligent, judicious christians, to the great comfort of those ministers, by whom they are taught, and benefit of the society to which they belong. When doctrinal truths are clearly unfolded to the understanding, and closely applied to the conscience, that all may be reduced to practice, the word is rightly divided, and most likely to obtain its end on those that hear it.

III. Another argument may be taken from the ministers themselves. It should be their care to divide the word aright, because

1. Hereby they *shew themselves workmen. Study to shew thy self a workman*: one that understands his business, that can turn his hand to any part of his work, is diligent in it, and performs it well, as it should be done; not as those, who not being masters of their business, go awkwardly about it, make bungling work of it, and do it by halves, but workman like. And how will they shew themselves workmen, but by rightly dividing the word of truth? By this it appears they are workmen indeed, men of skill and dexterity in their sacred calling; and then,

2. They need not be ashamed. He that understands his business, applies himself to it, and minds it, is neither unskilful nor unfaithful in it, is like a good workman, that needs not be ashamed of his work when it is done, it rather redounds to his honour. Indeed the best and most skilful have too much cause to be ashamed before God, and deeply humbled upon the account of their manifold imperfections; they blush to think how defective

festive they are, even in their best performances ; and yet they will not be ashamed, when they rightly divide the word, as if they were persons wholly unfit for their work, altogether unskilful and unfaithful, or sloathful and careless in it, not regarding how it is done ; such would indeed have cause to be ashamed, when he that rightly divides the word need not be so.

3. Hereby they approve themselves to God, which is the highest our ambition should carry us. Some labour to gain mens applause, by well turned and elegant periods, a pointed satyr, or profound reasoning ; but God's *euge* is better than their *hum* ; therefore says the apostle, *We labour whether present or absent, to be accepted of God (a)*, to have him say, *Well done thou good and faithful servant*. He may approve of and accept our labours, though others, it may be, despise both them and us. And then, as a farther reason,

4. They will be clear of the blood of all men. This will yield them no small comfort upon the review of their work, that though it is far from being perfect and compleat, they have been helped so to discharge their duty, as not to bring the blood of perishing souls upon their own heads. So it was to the apostle, as you see in that appeal he made to the elders of *Ephesus*, when taking his leave of them ; *wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men*. If any of them perish, their blood is upon their own head ; it don't lie at my door ; none of them perish through my default ; I have delivered my own soul, for I have so divided the word, as to keep back nothing that was profitable ; *nor have I shunned to declare the whole counsel of God (b)*. Happy the man, thrice happy the minister, that so divides the word of truth, as to shew himself a workman ; that has no need

(a) 2 Cor. 5. 9. (b) Acts 20. 26, 27.

to be ashamed; that approves himself to God, and is pure from the blood of all men.

Thirdly, As an improvement of what has been said, I shall now address my self in a few things both to ministers and people.

i. To ministers. This shews us the greatness and difficulty of the ministerial work. It is not so easy a thing, as some do imagine, to divide the word aright; on the contrary, it is a work of great nicety and exactness, as is plain, if we consider the many things we are to run through, the various cases we are to suit, and the different persons that are to be served. How hard a province is this? who is sufficient for it? he had need be a skilful workman, that is to divide the word so, as to give every person their proper portion, conviction and comfort, to whom they respectively belong, and to give this meat in due season; that having opened a wound, knows how and when tis fit to pour in oil to heal it. And then so to divide the word as to give every truth its due weight, to avoid all extreams, and sail so skilfully between them, as not to make shipwreck of the truth. Who is that wise and faithful servant! it is an easy thing to do this work in a superficial manner, slightly and perfunctorily, but to do it workman like, is arduous and difficult.

With regard to it, I would observe more particularly, this is a work, that hath its spring in the authority, wisdom, and grace of God himself. A dispensation of his favour and mercy is therein committed to us.

It is a work of the greatest importance to the souls of men.

It is that also of which we must give account at the great day.

It is a work that requires much skill and wisdom, great diligence and application.

308 *Of rightly dividing*

It must then be a work, to which of our selves we are by no means equal.

But then, lest all this should dishearten us; I add,

It is a work, wherein we may look for, and expect all needful encouragement from Christ. His special presence; *Lo I am with you always, to the end of the world* (a). His gracious assistance, support, acceptance and success, and in the end a glorious recompence.

It is our great comfort we don't bear this burden alone.

It was *Judah's* complaint, I only allude to it; *The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed* (b). This was the discouragement which the builders then lay under, and it is our complaint now. Our hands are weakned this day! our strength fails! our numbers lessen! we are weak by the removing so many active leading men, standard-bearers in their day; that were as he-goats before the flock; but let not this discourage us; does Christ fail, is he discouraged? if not, why should we? *He shall not fail, nor be discouraged* (c).

Let us not therefore be discouraged, by the difficulty of the work; our own insufficiency for it; the opposition of enemies; the slights and neglects of friends; the failing of the burden-bearers by sickness or death, but be strong and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. God will provide: he hath now done so for you of this congregation, and may the Lord abundantly bless the provision he hath made for his *Zion* here.

2. To the people. Do any ask what does the ministers work or duty concern us? what is all this to us? I answer much every way. And to make this appear, shall I be allowed, my friends,

(a) Matt. 28. 20. (b) Neh. 4. 10. (c) Isa. 42. 4.

to offer some things to those, for whose sake all this care is to be exercised? in doing which, I shall use that freedom which I think becomes me, however it may be taken by some. Though it should displease, I shall have the satisfaction of having discharged my conscience, and delivered my own soul; for I seek not to please men.

In the general then, if ministers are concerned to divide the word aright, how much are you concerned to hear and receive it aright? with what care then, with what reverence and godly fear ought you to attend upon it?

How conversant ought you to be in, and with all the ordinances of worship which God hath appointed? with what diligence should you stir up the various powers and faculties of your souls, that you may be able to conceive aright of, and apprehend the things that are delivered unto you from time to time?

With what readiness of mind and subjection of soul should you receive those truths that are propounded to you? since without this, whatever care is taken by others to divide the word aright, to you it is all lost, and of none effect.

But what I aim at more especially, are the following particulars, which will conclude this discourse.

1. Then suffer your ministers to divide the word aright; don't hinder them in the doing that which is so much their duty. If you ask, how can we hinder them herein? I answer, various ways you either do it, or go about to do it. For instance,

By being displeased with, and offended at their faithfulness in declaring the whole counsel of God, you hinder them, as far as in you lies. The time will come, says the apostle, when men will not endure sound doctrine. They call some truths hard sayings, and ask, who can hear them (a)?

(a) John 6. 60, 66.

Others can't bear home close preaching; they must be touched with a gentle hand; you must prophesy very smooth things to them, or they will fly in your face.

And some can't bear any thing but what is just to their own mind. If the law be preached, though for gospel ends; if duties are pressed, though from gospel principles, some may be so weak as to cry out against this, and condemn it as legal preaching. And on the other hand, when the eternal, sovereign, unconditional love and grace of God is insisted on, others may be ready to quarrel with it as a libertine doctrine, that leads men to sin, though the whole drift and design of it is to bring them to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts.

These, says one of practical preaching, are good honest things, plain and common, obvious to every ones capacity: of another sort of preaching, say some, this may stir the affections, but will never inform the judgment; it may make men warm and zealous, but leaves them weak and ignorant; as for themselves, being persons of superior and more elevated understandings, they like none but sublime preachers, that entertain them with matters of deep speculation, the profound mysteries of the gospel, and abstruser points of christianity; when these very things some others may dislike, are not at all affected with, nor edified by, because indeed what they don't understand.

When all this, perhaps, is just as it should be, the whole counsel of God must be declared; nothing ought to be kept back, that is profitable to be known; it is God's will, that every truth have its weight, and every person their portion. He will have none fed, to the utter neglect of others; and consider, what don't edify you may profit another; the things you don't relish may be very agreeable

greeable to another man's taste; though you don't like them, he may.

Again, you may hinder them herein, by your sloath and none-proficiency under the word. *And I brethren*, says the apostle to the *Corinthians*, *could not speak to you as unto spiritual*, i. e. Christians that had made any great proficiency in the ways of God, and arrived to any just degrees of perfection. *But as unto carnal*, not to grown men, but babes, and was therefore obliged to *feed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; neither yet are ye able (a)*. And to the same purpose he speaks (b), *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat*.

By such things as these you may hinder ministers from doing their duty, therefore watch against them, and allow them to begin with some, and lay the foundation; convince and awaken men to repentance, in order to their conversion; and having so done, then to go on with the building, and carry you from the first principles of the oracles of God, to the deeper mysteries of the gospel, which will make you more perfect in knowledge. Suffer them to divide the word aright; it is laid upon them as their duty; they are obliged to do it; they must, and if they are faithful will do it, whether herein they please men or no; they can't else approve themselves to God, nor be pure from your blood; they would not else be workmen; not good workmen; they would else be ashamed, as not having done their work well, therefore don't hinder them in the doing it; let not their faithfulness herein be evil thought, or spoken of by

(a) 1 Cor. 3. 1, 2.

(b) Heb. 5. 11. &c.

you; don't condemn all preaching that is not just to your taste and liking.

2. Be content in dividing the word, that others be served as well as your selves. The word should be so divided, that every one may have his portion: be willing then it should be so. Engross not all to your selves, as if none were to be served but you; all can't be spoke to at once; have patience then while others are served. Let saints sit contentedly sometimes to hear sinners threatned and awakened; and sinners hear the saints comforted; weak ones should let the strong have meat, and the strong allow those that are weak to have milk.

3. Make some good use of, and improve even those things that more properly belong to others: study and learn this holy art and skill. Some think nothing worth their hearing that don't just suit their own case; and how shall such be gratified, when there are almost as many minds and cases as persons. Some are for terror, others for comfort; some more for doctrine, and others for duty; some for that which moves their affections, others for that which serves to inform their judgments, and if they don't meet with what exactly suits them, are apt to be offended, and ready to ask what is all this to me; I had as good have stayed at home: but there is no truth that does not concern thee whoever thou art, and which if it is not thy own fault, thou mayest not make some good use of.

If thou art called into the fellowship of the gospel, and hearest sinners spoke to in the way of terror for their conviction; if their danger and misery be set before them; if these are threatned with death, wrath and condemnation; make a good use of this, and take occasion from hence to ad-
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dore that grace which hath delivered you from all this misery ; such a one was I in time past ; it is owing to the rich, free and sovereign grace of God I am not so still.

If on the other hand, sinners hear the good man's blessedness and privileges opened, let them take occasion from hence to bewail their own misery, who are strangers to all this happiness, and hitherto have no lot nor portion in this matter : let this make them restless in their present state of sin and misery, and earnestly desirous to share the glorious privileges others are partakers of.

When babes and children are spoke to and fed with milk, let the strong and more advanced believer improve what is said to these weak and feeble christians. Well ! I remember the time when I was such a one my self ; a meer novice in religion ; what thanks do I owe to God, that I am not so still, but in some good measure have outgrown my former childishness, and need no longer milk, but can digest and feed upon stronger meat ; though after all, I am far from having attained, and have nothing to boast of ? And when the weak hear those things, which are more fitted to the strong, let this provoke them to aspire after the like attainments ; shame their sloth and slender progress in religion ; when I see and hear what others have attained, it shews what I ought to be, and perhaps might have been long since, had I not been slothful and careless, but press'd after the like attainments. This is our duty, and will be our wisdom, since the word is to be so divided, to fetch in and gather up something that may be for our own advantage, even from those truths that more directly point at others, and do not so immediately concern our selves.

4. In this daily distribution let every one take his

his own portion. Rightly to divide the word, is to give every one his portion, and rightly to hear the word, is to take every one his portion. Terror to whom terror belongs, and comfort to whom comfort belongs, and not on the contrary, which yet is too common a case, so that the sinner and hypocrite snatches the saint's comfort, and sincere souls fall under the hypocrites terror; concluding, all that is said for the detecting and awakening the former, is meant of, and belongs to himself. God so orders it in the distribution of spiritual food, that there should be suitable provision for every one, and we had need be very careful in this matter, to understand what belongs to us, and accordingly take and apply the word to our selves. It will be our wisdom, as it is our duty and interest, not to misapply the word, and take that to our selves, which belongs to another, and refuse that which properly belongs to us.

5. Receive divine truths, according to their nature and importance. Learn from hence to lay the stress where it ought to be laid. Some things are essential to salvation, and of indispensible necessity. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall dye in your sins. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God; without faith it is impossible to please God. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. They that are in the flesh cannot please God;* so that we must be born again, and become new creatures; there is a necessity of it; these are the things on which the scriptures have laid the great stress, and so ought we. Other things are not to be neglected; but these are more especially to be regarded. Let us then watch against a false zeal, which is unevenly carried out towards things of a much inferior nature, while those of far more importance are too much neglected. This was what our Sa-
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viour so severely reprov'd and condemn'd in the Pharisees. Their enlarged phylacteries shew'd them greatly concerned to have God's laws seen in their foreheads, when they had little care to have them written in their hearts. They would by no means eat with unwashen hands, lest they should transgress the tradition of the elders, while they took no care to have their natures changed, and their hearts purified by renewing grace, but lived under the power of corrupt nature, in a direct contempt of the commands of God. They were very exact and punctual to a tittle, in observing some external rites and customs, as the *Jews* before them had been very inquisitive about times, days and months (a). They abounded in these ritual observances, things of a more minute concernment, while the much more substantial duties of religion were grossly neglected, and abstained from some things which God did not forbid them, rather than from those practices which he had expressly interdicted. They tithed mint, anise and cummin, when they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; they strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel; made clean the outside of the cup, but within were full of extortion and excess (b). This is the certain note and ordinary guise of hypocrites; but the right handling the word is a direction to us in this matter; that teaches us to lay the stress upon things of the greatest necessity and importance, and to be less solicitous about things of an indifferent nature.

To conclude; when the word is rightly divided and heard, so as to give and take every one his portion; when the stress is laid both by speaker and hearers where it ought to be, and a regard is paid to all truths according to their weight and

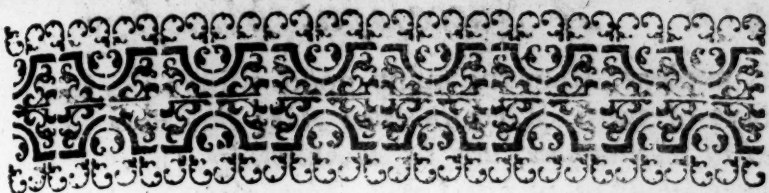
(a) Zech. 6. 2; 7.

(b) Matth. 23. 23, 24, 25.

importance, so that we are comparatively little solicitous about the lower and meaner things in religion, and principally concerned about the essentials of christianity; then is the word rightly received as well as divided, to the great comfort both of ministers and people, and the honour of him whose word it is; to whom be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. *Amen.*



A Succes-



A Successful Ministry the Blessing of GOD.

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the setting apart the

Reverend Mr. WRIGHT,
TO THE
OFFICE *and* WORK *of a*
PASTOR *in the late Mr.*
FOXON'S Church, 1724.

I Cor. iii. 6.

I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

CORINTH was one of the most infamous places for all sorts of wickedness and impiety in the then heathen world; and yet out of this city, did God by the ministry of his servant *Paul*, gather a church to himself, upon many accounts, one of the most eminent and considerable in the christian world. This
is

is evident, from the many good things the apostle says of them, *That in every thing they were enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, so that they came behind in no gift (a).* They abounded in every thing (that was good) in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all diligence and in love (b); and yet they were far from being that perfect church they would be thought to be. There were many things among them which deserved reproof, and needed correction. If some of them were persons of extraordinary and uncommon attainments, the knowledge they had puffed them up, and swelled them with pride, made them wanton and factious, bred in them a fond conceit of themselves, and too great a contempt of others. *Now ye are full; now ye are rich: now you reign as kings. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise (c).* And if some among them were persons that had a good measure of knowledge, others of them were babes and children in understanding. They had some very weak, childish persons and things among them, and which was worse, there was a great deal of carnality which discovered itself, so that the apostle tells them, *I could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ (d).* How high soever they were in parts and gifts, they fell short, and were very defective in the exercise of many graces, as appears by those unnatural unchristian dilapidations, and fierce contentions, those strifes and envyings that were amongst them, to the great scandal of christianity; upon the account of which, the apostle appeals to them, themselves being judges, whether they were not carnal, and did not walk more like men than christians, especially of their attainments. And this discovered itself par-

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 5, 7. (b) 2 Cor. 8. 7. (c) 1 Cor. 4. 8, 10.
 (d) 1 Cor. 3. 1, 3.

ticularly in their conduct towards their ministers; some they cried up, and others they did as much run down. They e'en idolized some, and made little Gods of them, while they nullified others, and made nothing of them; so partial and unequal were they in their respects to them. They divided about three of the best preachers that ever lived upon earth. One gloried that he was of *Paul*, another that he was of *Apollos*; and a third that he was of *Cephas* (a). These contentions and running into parties, were great evidences of their carnality. The apostle therefore chides and reproves them for these things, as childish, and sets himself to cure the distemper. Every one must have his *Paul*, his *Apollos*, his *Cephas*; no body else will go down with them. Pray, says the apostle, *who is Paul* and *who is Apollos*? were you baptized into their names? are these authors of your faith? are any of them more than ministers by whom you believed? *I indeed planted you and Apollos watered you*: but if ever either he or I did you any good, it is owing to God, for he gave the increase. So that neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth any thing, whatever you make of them. Neither the one nor the other is any thing of himself; all of them put together are nothing in the work of salvation without God; thus humbly, thus diminutively he speaks of himself, as well as *Apollos*. And these things, which I have now been speaking of about your partiality toward your ministers, in over-valuing some, and underrating others, *I have transferred in a figure to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you might learn in us not to think of men, above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up, for one against another* (b). The sense of which is generally thought

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 12.

(b) 1 Cor. 4. 6.

to be, that the apostle conceals the names of those ambitious teachers about whom they really were divided, and substitutes his own, and that of *Apollos* in their room; as it were to take their disgrace upon themselves. To avoid every thing that might provoke and exasperate, he makes himself and *Apollos* figures or types of those he intended, as if that agreed to them, which was only true of others; and he really meant others, when he named themselves; not as if they had set up him, or *Apollos* in this factious way, but under their names he represents how they acted towards others. But this is an interpretation, there are some that do by no means fall in with; nor is there, as they apprehend, the least footstep of a reason for it. The apostle does not here reprove any false teachers; nor was there any mention made of them before; but he reproves the people themselves, who said, *I am of Paul*, &c. He don't say, I have transferred these things for their sakes, but for your sakes, that you might learn in us, not to think of men above that which is written, that you might not set a higher rate upon any of your teachers, than what is meet, nor value yourselves upon your relation to, or dependance upon one minister more than another, though it were my self or *Apollos*. And then the plain meaning is, he had used so low and humble a metaphor, as that of a husbandman's, or gardiner's planting and watering, to give them an example of humility, that they might not think any preachers of the gospel to be more than stewards, ministers, and instruments, nor be puffed up one against another, for this or that teacher, or boast of their being the admirers and followers of such a one; for even I my self am but a planter, and *Apollos* one that watereth; it is God that gives all the increase.

From

From which words I observe,

Obs. 1. There are some persons, whose more especial and appropriate business it is, to begin and carry on the work of God in the souls of men. It is here supposed, that there should be such a thing as planting and watering, in order to an increase; and there must be some proper hand to do this. *God hath*, says the apostle, *committed to us the ministry of reconciliation*. He makes use of the ministry of some men, to save the souls of others. When he designed the conversion of *Cornelius* and his house, he sends an angel, not to preach to him; he must not receive the gospel from his hand; but to bid him send for *Peter*, who should tell him what he ought to do (a). God had much people in *Corinth*, and if he had so pleased, could have called them immediately himself, or sent an angel to them, but he rather makes use of the ministry of man, and therefore sends *Paul* to plant them, and *Apollos* to water them. Of his own will he begets us, but it is by the word of truth, and ordinarily by the ministry of that word, wherein the goodness and wisdom of God is evidently seen, however it be despised by some as a needless and foolish institution; and it ought to be a great thing in our eye, as it is such a standing testimony of the kindness of God, and shews how willing he is men should come to the knowledge of the truth.

Obs. 2. God furnishes those whom he thus employs, with a variety of gifts, and these in very different degrees, for the carrying on this work and design of his in the world. Some persons by the special ordination, and at the pleasure of God, are designed for planting, and others for watering. *I have planted you, and Apollos watered you.* This

(a) Acts 10. 5.

is not a mere figurative representation, but a matter of fact. God said to *Paul* in a vision, *I have much people in this city* (a). Lord, might he have thought of a people in *Corinth*! one of the most infamous places in the world? yes, says, God, in this city, as lewd as it is, I have much people, many that belong to the election of grace. Some of God's people may lye in places, where we least expect to find them. Thither therefore *Paul* is sent to gather in this people. It is good labouring, where there is like to be a large harvest. After these things *Paul* departed from *Athens*, and went to *Corinth* (b). He was sent to break ground, and begin a good work among them. He first preached the gospel to them, and sowed the good seed of the word in that city: he laid the foundation of a christian church there, and converted them to the faith, *many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised* (c). This work he was more especially designed and fitted for; I have planted.

Then comes another, and he waters what the former had planted, and this was *Apollos*, a man eminently fitted for that work. *Paul* was to bring those in that were without, and *Apollos* to build those up that were brought in. He was disposed to pass into *Achaia*, God having inclined his mind that way; and the brethren wrote to the disciples that were at *Corinth*, exhorting them to receive him (d). They at *Ephesus* had a great loss in being deprived of his labours, but did not grudge the disciples in *Achaia*, and particularly at *Corinth*, the benefit of them, but approved his purpose of going thither, and recommended both him and his labours unto them; for though the churches are many in themselves, they are one in Christ.

(a) Acts 18. 10. (b) Acts 18. 1. (c) Acts 18. 8.

(d) Acts 18. 27. 19. 1.

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Paul had set the wheel a going at *Corinth*; many were stirred up and prevailed upon by his preaching to embrace the faith; these young converts needed to be confirmed and carried on in religion, but after a stay of near two years he must leave them, being called to the same work elsewhere. In this vacancy there was a fair occasion for *Apollos* to step in and water what the other had planted; and it is said, *He helped them much who had believed through grace (a)*. One had begun a good work, the other carried it on. Paul was their father, as he tells them, *Though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers; but I have begotten you through the gospel (b)*. They were made christians by his ministry; he was the great instrument of their new birth, and so was their spiritual father, and they his beloved sons. *Apollos* was their nursing father; he, as it were, brought them up, confirmed and established them, so that they were both in their way excellent ministers, and of eminent service in the church of God, one to plant, and the other to water.

Obs. 3. All that these can do, whatever their gifts are, is to plant and water. They are, at best, but instrumental means, not efficient causes of mens believing; no authors of their faith, only ministers by whom they believe. *The words of the wise, says Solomon, are as goads and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, i. e. prophets, pastors, teachers, ministers, and holy men of God; their words are as goads to the ox, as they prick forward that dull and sluggish animal, and make him mend his pace, so these excite and stir us up to our duty, when we are sloathful and remiss; and as nails are fastned in a sure place, these are designed to fix persons in that which is good,*

(a) Acts 18. 27. (b) 1 Cor. 4. 15.

when they are wavering and uncertain. These nails are said to be fastened by the masters of assemblies; which tells us, there have been and must be assemblies for religious worship; that these were of ancient date and a divine institution, for the honour of God, and the good of mankind. That there are masters of these assemblies, not to lord it over them, but to lead and guide them, to go in and out before them, to preside among them, to be God's mouth to them, and their mouth to God; these are to fasten the word in a sure place, and drive it as a nail to the head. But God has not laid it upon them to do this of themselves, and by any power of their own. These masters are given by one shepherd, and he that gives them must prosper them; or the truths and words themselves, which are as goads and nails, are given by one shepherd, and he whose words they are must give them their vertue, or the wisest and best furnished masters will never be able to fasten them in a sure place, or drive the nails to the head (a). They can but plant and water.

God never put more upon them than this. He don't require the success and increase at their hands; he never laid it upon them as conditions of their acceptance and reward, that they should of themselves convert sinners to him, and persuade men to be reconciled, any farther than as instruments.

Nor is it in their power to do more than this. There is not strength sufficient in any human arm to fasten these nails in the hearts of men. It is not within the compass of any created power to turn one sinner to God. Were angels themselves to be constant preachers in our assemblies, they could not with all their heavenly eloquence con-

(a) Ecclef. 12. 11.

vert a soul; nor they that talk ever so much like angels; not *Paul* with all his learning and fervor, nor *Apollos*, though so eloquent and suasive; all that they can do is to plant and water, they could not of themselves give any increase.

Obs. 4. The success of the ministry altogether depends upon, and is entirely owing to the blessing of God. *Paul's* planting, and *Apollos* watering, would never come to any thing, if God did not give the increase; all the success of the labour is owing to him. Diligence and faithfulness belongs to us, but success to God. When the apostle therefore was to plant at *Corinth*, God says to him, fear not, I am with thee to secure thee against the rage of thine enemies, and to assist and succeed thee in the discharge of thy duty, that thou mayest not labour in vain. *As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth, it shall not return to me void, but accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it (a).* And no wonder, since God hath an immediate access to the spirits of men, and their hearts are all in his hands, to turn them as the rivers of water. He works upon the mind, and enlightens the understanding; sends the word armed with his own power, in the day whereof he makes a willing people; after which he gives the vigour of grace to grow up in faith and holiness, which is intended by his giving the increase.

The improvement of what hath been said, to which I now proceed, will give us a fair occasion for some following inferences and directions.

(a) *Isai.* 55. 10, 11.

Inf. 1. It is a great instance of divine goodness, and a singular mercy to a people, when God sends ministers to plant and water them. Little do we consider, what a treasure is committed to us in the ministry and ordinances of the gospel. It is an invaluable blessing, wherever it is vouchsafed. As such the psalmist speaks of it, when he says, *He hath shewed his word unto Jacob, and his judgments to Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation* (a). Such it was to Corinth, whither God first sent the apostle *Paul* to begin, and then *Apollos* to carry on a good work among them.

Ministers are and must be called off their service; there is a limited duration, within the compass of which their work lies; they must not always labour and never rest. You have lately had an instance of this among your selves; being deprived of one by death, that planted and watered you, and to whose labours among you, God gave a more than ordinary success. It is your mercy under this afflicting providence, that God hath now given you another pastor, and I trust, one after his and your heart to enter upon the labours of the former, to plant some anew, and water what was planted before. To have such ministerial labours bestowed upon us, to plough up the fallow ground, throw in the seed, and water it when that is done, is an act of the meer grace of God, and a singular mercy to any people.

Inf. 2. This tells us the painfulness and labour of the ministerial work. It is an office that calls men to plant and water, and that without ceasing; this is labour even to weariness. The Apostle at one time talks of it in the style of a builder. *Ye are God's building*, (b). *And according to the grace of God given me, I as a wise master build-*

(a) Psal. 147. 19, 20.

(b) 1 Cor. 3. 9.

er have laid the foundation. There are others, whose work it is to build upon this foundation; this being well and carefully laid, the superstructure must be carried on with all diligence, only let him that builds upon this foundation, take heed what he lays thereon, and see that it be gold, silver, and precious stones; not wood, hay and stubble. The text leads us to another allusion, and that is, the husbandman's calling. *Ye are God's husbandry*; and ministers are as his husbandmen. The former metaphor shews, that the work of the ministry requires a good degree of skill and understanding, lest we be foolish builders; the latter tells us, what labour and pains it requires. The husbandman's is a painful laborious calling; there is no room for sloath and idleness; he must either be ploughing, or sowing, or reaping, ever planting, or watering; his life is a constant toil: this shews the painfulness and labour of the work. Christ's ministers are to take pains not to take state upon them.

Inf. 3. This leads us to reflect upon our own insufficiency, and from thence to see the necessity of an intire dependance upon God's assistance and blessing. Is this the work to which we are called? so difficult, so laborious! how natural then is such a reflection? who is sufficient for it? where is the skill, the wisdom, and furniture necessary hereunto? the best qualified and most able ministers, will have, and ought to have, a just sense of their own insufficiency, and not go forth to their work, (which yet we are too prone to do) in the strength of their own gifts and preparations, but with a dependance upon God for his presence and blessing. *Paul* and *Apollos* could do nothing without God. Who then are we? and what can we do of our selves? You, my good brother, ought

to enter upon your work in this place, deeply sensible here of.

Inf. 4. This administers occasion for great thoughtfulness, and solicitude of mind, as to what has been, or will be the success of our labours. The husbandman's is a careful, as well as a laborious and painful calling. He ploughs, he sows, he plants and waters, and all this in hope, but not without fear. He is often full of care, and hath many thoughts what harvest he shall reap, whether he shall receive his seed with advantage, and enjoy the fruit of all his labour; he knows not which shall prosper, his morning or evening seed; this, or that, both alike, or neither. This is applicable to spiritual husbandmen; they plant and water in hope, but with much fear. They sow their seed in the morning, and in the evening do not withhold their hands, not knowing whether this or that shall prosper, and not without some fear and trembling, lest all this, as to many at least, should be in vain. *I was*, says the apostle to these *Corinthians*, *with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling (a)*. He trembles at the thought of a fruitless ministry. Though he was told, God had much people in that city, and he was sent thither on purpose to gather them in; and tho' he took the most likely way to have his ministry rendered effectual; for says he, *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit, and of power (b)*. Yet he tells them, I was with you in weakness and in fear, &c. lest after all he should mismanage his trust, and any thing on his part should hinder the success of the gospel, and obstruct the course

(a) 1 Cor. 2. 3. (b) 1 Cor. 2. 4.

of his ministry, so that as to many of them he should labour in vain, and spend his strength for nought. None know the fears and trembling of poor ministers; they are conscious to themselves of their own weakness and insufficiency; sensible that all their success depends upon the divine pleasure and blessing, and can't be without their fears, lest by any false steps and misconduct of theirs, God should be provoked to leave them to themselves, and with-hold that so necessary a blessing; so that they should not profit the people at all, nor see any increase of their planting and watering, but all their time and pains should be lost, and to no saving purpose: this, of all things, would be grievous and afflicting to them. Said it would be to plant and water, and nothing come of it. Such an account from those that watch for souls, could not be given up to God, but with the utmost grief (a). They are fearful for themselves, knowing how insufficient they are; jealous over souls with a godly jealousy, knowing how precious they are, and in what danger of being lost. There are great thoughts of heart, for what God sends them to such a people; will he go with us, when we go forth to plant and water? shall we come to them in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel? will God honour us so far as to make us instruments of good to the souls of those among whom we labour? will God give the increase? shall I see the fruit of my labour? or will it be in vain? am I employed, where he would have me to be? can I reasonably expect and hope for his blessing? for want of this, how many prayers and sermons are lost? and what numbers of souls perish? God in righteous judgment with-holds the blessing; his special saving power is not put forth; his arm

(a) Heb. 13.

is not revealed; reports then are not believed; and the word which was designed for life, proves a favour of death unto death, and they are with a people in fear and much trembling, lest this should be the case.

Inf. 5. Then we should not be partially addicted to, and fond of any one minister, to the despising of others. This was the fault, which the apostle here sets himself to correct. One said, I am of *Paul*, his follower and admirer: he is a deep, sublime, evangelical preacher; warm and zealous in the defence of the gospel; a great asserter of its doctrines; one that reasons strongly and clearly. Profound *Paul*! I care to hear no other; there is none like him. Another said, I am of *Apollos*; he is a man fervent in spirit, and mighty in the scriptures (a). Full of divine light and heat, of divine knowledge and affection; he preaches as one in earnest, and whose heart is in his work; he is moreover an eloquent man, a master of language, one that has a great command of words, a fine orator, a charming preacher, having a tuneable voice, and a most agreeable delivery; his tongue is tipp'd with silver, he speaks like an orator, yea an oracle, fully, fluently, pertinently, having words at will; he has a most pleasing, powerful, convincing way of talking; I am therefore for *Apollos*. So among us, instead of being thankful for that large supply of ministers we are blessed with, and the endowments of them all in their way, and endeavouring to reap advantage from their mutual labours, we vainly glory in men, set them up above, and even against one another, and run into parties for their sakes. I am for such a one, his tongue is well hung, his language fine, and his delivery graceful; he talks

(a) Acts 19. 24, 25.

off hand, and without book ; or for such a man, he talks profoundly, reasons closely, demonstrates clearly, handles an argument well ; or for such a one, he interprets solidly, and then applies with great warmth and affection, comes home and close to the conscience : or for another, because he confutes error with great zeal and judgment, contends earnestly for the faith, is valiant for the truth, and zealous in God's cause, when others are cold and lukewarm ; he is a staunch, orthodox man, and heartily subscribes to the truth. I am for none but such men as these. Well, says another, I don't like these angry, hot men ; they have too much fire for me ; I am for men that have more temper and moderation, that assert their christian liberty, and wont be imposed upon by others ; I don't like him the worse, but the better for refusing what they would require of him, who had no authority to do it, and indeed don't much care to hear any others.

I would not be thought by all this to suppose, that one minister may not be justly preferred to another. God puts greater honour upon some than others ; he bestows upon them more eminent gifts, makes them taller by the head and shoulders than many of their brethren, vouchsafes to them more abundant measures of his spirit, and gives much greater success to their labours, than to many others. It is past doubt also, that persons may have a more particular affection and respect for some ministers than others, and be allowed to have them higher in their esteem and value. Their gifts are more accommodated and fitted to their taste and genius ; or they have been made of greater use to them than any others ; they have many instructors, but these have been their fathers ; they have begotten them again through the gospel, which endears to them their persons
and

and ministry, and they must be allowed to have a superior respect to these. Such a preferring one to another, will be unavoidable in such a city as this, where there is so great a variety of gifts. And indeed, it is well for us it is so, that all are not for one man, or one sort of preaching; as it is our happiness there is such a diversity of gifts from one and the same spirit, for different tastes and attainments. The fault then here reprov'd, is the so preferring one, as to neglect and despise others, when the abilities of some are cried up to the contempt of others; when you are puff'd up for one against another, magnify one and vilify another. This evil proceeds farther, and has very bad effects; minister is oppos'd to minister, which might set them at variance, and breed mutual emulation, as rivals and competitors for the people's favour, which would produce anger, strife and contention; so liable are the best things in the world to be corrupted through the lusts of men.

This was the fault the apostle found with them, and the thing he blamed them for, their having mens persons so much in admiration; this shew'd they were carnal, very carnal, and by a variety of arguments, by many creature-abasing, and God-exalting questions, he sets himself to cure this evil.

Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, about whom you thus contend (a)? He puts a slight upon himself and other ministers, that God might have the glory, whose is the power. They are but ministers by whom ye believed; they are ministers but not saviours, the instruments, but not authors of your faith; think not therefore above what is meet of any of them.

(a) Acts 19. 5.

Again, their success is *as the Lord gave to every man* (a). So that you should not boast of their gifts, nor make parties upon that account. The instrument can do nothing without the hand to use it.

It is true, I have planted, *Apollos* watered, but whoever does this, whether your admired *Paul* or *Apollos*, it is God that gives the increase (b). So that all these you contend about, of themselves, are nothing; neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth any thing, but God that giveth the increase (c). They have nothing but what they have received, and can do nothing but as they are succeeded.

These again are all one. (d) *Now he that planteth, and he that watereth are one.* In some things they may differ, but in this they are all agreed, according to the best of their capacities, to serve the interest of their common Lord. They are one in their work, and therefore ought not to be divided among themselves. They serve one master, and if they are faithful, pursue one and the same design.

Once more, he tells them, these are all theirs. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all these are yours* (e). You need never contend about them, they are all for the common benefit, and advantage of the whole Church; profound *Paul*, eloquent *Apollos*, and solid *Cephas*. Therefore however they might value themselves upon this, as if it were an attainment, the apostle tells them, in this they walked as men. Whatever they thought of it, there was much more of the man than the christian in it, therefore let no man glory in men; which brings us in the second place to the following directions.

(a) Acts 19. 5. (b) Acts 19. 6. (c) Acts 19. 7.
(d) Acts 19. 8. (e) 1 Cor. 3. 23.

I. Let ministers then give diligence in their work, as ever they expect God should give the increase of it. *Apollos* spake, and taught diligently the things of God (a). The more laborious the calling, the greater pains are required. Be wholly therefore in these things, says the apostle to *Timothy*; give thy self to meditation, study and prayer, so doing thou shalt save thy self, and them that hear thee (b). Plant, water, sow thy seed in the morning, and in the evening with-hold not thy hand. Rather let it be said, I want success than diligence; and am unprofitable, than sloathful and disobedient. Herein we perform our part, and do what lies upon us, and it will be our great comfort, when leaving this world, to have conscience testify to our sincerity herein, that we have endeavoured to fulfil our ministry, and profit the souls committed to our care; whereas, at such a time especially, how shall we be able to bear the reproaches of our own consciences, when they tell us we ascended the pulpit rather to shew our own wit, and learning, vent our passion, to please a fancy, promote a party, or advance our selves, than to profit the people, and save the souls of men.

II. Let the people then endeavour to profit; that is their duty. Be not satisfied that you are under the ministry of one, who shines and burns beyond others; you may do this rather for your credit than your profit; and boast, as these *Corinthians* did, I am of such a one, to be thought wiser than others, in the choice of so learned and celebrated a ministry, and fall into a secret contempt of others, as men of much inferior attainments. Remember your account for this will be so much the greater, and so much the sadder too,

(a) Acts 18. 25. (b) 1 Tim. 4. 15, 16.

if such signal advantages are not answered by a suitable improvement. It will be sad to be cast into hell at last, for not profiting by these uncommon helps, after we had been exalted up to heaven by the enjoyment of them.

III. Implore this increase, both ministers and people; water the seed that is sown, with prayers and tears. Since God makes use of them to plant and water, they ought most earnestly to concern themselves herein, and be very intent upon carrying on this saving design; and since after all their care, the success depends entirely upon God's blessing, it behoves them to be very serious as well as frequent in their addresses to him, for this increase. Does all depend upon this? is it God that gives it? shall we not then ask it of him? what have we to do but besiege the throne of his grace with strong cries and earnest requests, that he would lend his hand, and command a blessing? for when the hand of the Lord is with us, many will believe and turn to the Lord (a).

Sirs, what else are we doing this day? is it not our professed design, solemnly to invoke God on the behalf of him, that is now come to plant and water in this place (b); that he would be present with his servant, command his blessing on his word and ordinances, give farther success, and fresh testimonies to the word of his grace; that he would preserve the peace and purity of this church, establish them in the truth as it is in Jesus, promote their growth and increase in grace and holiness, and cause them to abound in all the fruits of righteousness? and how reasonable, that what is done in this publick manner, should be our daily exercise in private? how often does the great apostle bespeak the prayers of the meanest

(a) Acts. 11. 21.

(b) The Reverend Mr. Robert Wright.

christians for himself and his fellow labourers? *Brethren pray for us, I beseech you for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that you strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me.*

The greatest of ministers may be helped by the prayers of a plain honest christian. The apostles were very sensible of this, and therefore begg'd the people to pray for them; we have a great work upon our hands, for which we have no sufficiency as of our selves; we are nothing; we can do, we shall be nothing of our selves; we shall not save one soul; our ministry will be a deadly favour to those that attend it, unless God give it a vital breath. We are but instruments, and what can these do without a hand to use them? we can but plant and water, God only can give the increase; oh therefore pray for this; beg it at his hands: I obtest it by all that is sacred and valuable for our sakes, for your own sakes, yea for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the Spirit's sake, if you have any love to the Lord Jesus, any regard to and concern for him, his interest, his kingdom and glory; if you have ever experienced the love of the spirit, and would return your love to him, don't fail to pray for us.

IV. If one plants and another watereth, then let us rejoyce in each others success. The apostle *Paul* had planted at *Corinth*; after him comes *Apollos*, and he waters what his predecessor had planted; he was not uneasy that *Apollos* entred upon his labours, nor grudged the success he had in watering, but went to his work more chearfully at *Ephesus*, knowing such an excellent man as *Apollos* was got to *Corinth*, to carry on what he had begun. Some of them would have set him up above *Paul*, and made him the head of a party against him; but notwithstanding this, he had no jealousy of him as his rival, nor any uneasiness at the people's esteem

esteem of him; they were both employed by one master, and engaged in the same design, and therefore would rejoyce in each others success. It should please us that our Master's work goes on, whatever hands he employs in the doing it; and make us glad the word prospers and is succeeded, whether we are more or less instrumental in it. Let it be no uneasiness to us, that there are others, who can do the Lord's work better than we can, and are so much owned in it beyond what we are: we should be content to be eclipsed, if Christ do but shine the brighter; if he encreases it is enough, though we decrease. O! that there were such a spirit among us.

V. Whatever our success is, let God have the glory of it. It must be mighty pleasing to ministers, when they find themselves much followed, and taken great notice of; the people flock to them in multitudes; their labours are remarkably succeeded; the church is increased, and numbers are daily added to it by their means; but under such a flow of success, there is great need to watch their own spirits, lest they should be vainly puffed up in their own minds, and arrogate that to themselves, which belongs only to God. This brings to mind what is related of pope *Adrian*, who having erected at great expence a noble college at *Louvain*, caused it to be written in letters of gold at the entrance into it, *Utrecht* planted, there he was born; *Louvain* watered, there he was educated; *Cesar* gave the increase, by his means he was of a preceptor made a cardinal. One to correct the vanity of the man, writ underneath, *here God did nothing*. This was very different from the apostle, who, when he tells them, I have planted, *Apollos* watered, and a great increase there was and a rich harvest, acknowledges it all came from God, and he shall have the glory of it.

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To conclude; if any are made great use of and under their ministry the blind and ignorant are enlightened, and led into the way of salvation; the secure are awakened; the heedless and unthinking are roused to a sense of their danger; prophane and ungodly sinners are turned from their evil ways to God; in a word, if wandering and lost sheep are brought into Christ's fold, and those brought in are built up; if deluded and mistaken souls are reduced, and brought again into the way of truth; if weak and doubting consciences are resolved; if mourners in *Zion* and disconsolate souls are revived and comforted, others are not to look upon them, as though by their own power or holiness they had wrought such cures on the souls of men; nor should they look upon themselves, as if by their superior wisdom and learning they had performed these mighty things; they will not take the honour of all this to themselves, but carefully transmit it to God, to whom of right it belongs. How much soever they excel others in gifts and grace, they never make the word effectual by any power of their own. There are many souls in whom all this planting and watering is to no saving purpose; if it be of any real advantage to others, it is God that makes it so. *Paul* plants, *Apollos* waters, but it is God that gives the increase; to him therefore be all the glory, now, and for ever. *Amen.*



THE
GOSPEL INVITATION,
In three SERMONS

PREACH'D at the
Reverend Mr. EARL'S, 1721.

On LUKE XIV. 13.



S E R M O N I.

LUKE XIV. 23.

And compel them to come in, that my house may be full.



HERE are two things almost equally strange and surprizing, the rich provision which the great God has made for man's happiness, and the vile contempt, which he casts upon all this glorious grace: both these are fully represented to us in that parable, whereof the words of the text are a part—In the parable we have,

Z 1

i. The

1. The provision it self. *A certain man made a great supper and bade many (a)*, which tells us, the great God spares no cost in that entertainment he makes for the souls of men; but provides all things necessary for their salvation.

2. The invitation to accept this provision. *He sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready (b)*.

3. The success of this invitation. *They all with one consent began to make excuse (c)*. This primarily relates to the Jews but shews at the same time, the general disposition of all mankind. It's natural for every man to make excuses in this case.

4. The report made of this neglect. *So that servant came and shewed his Lord these things (d)*; and we may be sure with no small concern that his message should meet with no better a reception.

5. The master's resentment of this carriage. *He was angry (e)*, as well he might, for what cou'd be more provoking? Being angry, He passes this sentence, *None of those that were bidden shall taste of my supper (f)*.

6. A fresh commission granted; or a new invitation given. *He said unto his servants, go out quickly into the streets, and lanes of the city, and bring hither, the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind (g)*. This the servants did, and found some success in it, as appears by their report, *Lord it's done as thou hast commanded (h)*, and some are brought into thy house; but not so many as to fill it; for yet *there is room*. Upon which he gives forth a farther commission, *to go out into the highways and hedges, to sinners among the gentiles, and compel them to come in, that his house may be filled*, since yet there is room. This speaks God's bountiful liberality and

(a) Luke 14. 16. (b) Luke 14. 17. (c) Luke 14. 18.
 (d) Luke 14. 21. (e) Luke 14. 21. (f) Luke 14. 21
 (g) Luke 14. 22. (h) ver. 22.

earnest desire that all should partake of his grace. He would have his house filled, and in order to it, persons compelled to come in. *Compel them*, as if some force and violence was to be offered to them. Constrain them; be urgent and important with them, give them no rest, take no denial, convince them by arguments, overcome them by entreaties, that they may not be able any longer to refuse the invitation, make it necessary for them to come in, and never leave them till you have prevailed upon them, and perswaded them to do it.

From the words, I propose the following observation.

Obs. It's the great work and business of Christ's servants in the ministry to compel persons to come into his house, and accept the provision he has made for their recovery.

The sinners duty is to come in, the servants work is to compel them to it; the end and design of all is that *God's house may be full*. I shall here

- I. Shew what persons shou'd be brought to do.
- II. How and in what way they are to be brought to this. And then
- III. Apply the whole.

I. Then we are to shew what persons shou'd be brought to do. In the general they ought to come in—Not merely into this, or that church, whether, as some affect to speak, it be called catholic, or national or particular.

It is not persons being profelytes to a distinguishing name, or brought over to a particular party of christians, nor is it the bringing them over barely to the observance of certain rites and customs which some having invented for themselves,

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they zealously press upon others ; nor once more, is it only to come to the sacrament and partake of the Lord's supper.

There's a great deal of zeal in some to bring others into the bosom of the Church, out of which they tell them there's no salvation. Much pains have been taken, and no small severities used to oblige persons to a compliance with such a particular way of worship ; and force them to take the sacrament after the customs and usages of their church ; but the thing here intended is their being brought into God's house, to partake of the benefits and blessings of the gospel in order to their salvation : to come to that feast which God had made, and the supper he had provided.

The provisions of the gospel, had been represented here under the similitude of a feast : agreeably to which, the servants are sent to invite the guests saying to 'em, *Come, for all things are now ready.* They that were bidden refuse to come : *go then,* says the master, *to others,* try what you can do with them ; compel them to come in, that my house may be filled, and the provisions I have made be accepted.

So then, *to come in,* is to come to the gospel feast, to accept of Christ, and his benefits ; to embrace the gospel, and that great salvation, it reveals.

But how shall they be brought to do this ? the answer to this enquiry brings me to the

II. *Gen.* which is to shew how and by what methods persons may be brought to do this. In the general the servants must *compel* them to come in.

But it may be said, Is not this a very strange and an unjustifiable way of proceeding ? must men be forced to be religious, and compelled to their duty ? are these the methods prescribed by the meek

meek and innocent Jesus? and to be used by the servants of the Lord, that must not strive, but be gentle to all men? But this will give us no uneasiness, if we consider the nature of this compulsion, and what our Saviour intends by it; which what it is, we come now to shew. By this compulsion then, we are not to understand an external coaction, but a rational moral perswasion. This is not

First, An External coaction. It can't be meant of any outward force and violence offered to the consciences of men. Our blessed Saviour, never intended to propagate his religion in the world by such methods as these. Indeed heathenism and popery have obtained in the world this way. The most powerful arguments of the Romish synagogue have been fire and faggot, jayls and galleys, as if they wou'd prove themselves St. *Peter's* successors by the use they make of his sword.

They compel men to come to Mass by telling them they will otherwise burn them at a stake. Others force men to the sacrament by threatening them with fines, imprisonment, &c.

And that they may have some thing to justify them in these inhumane proceedings, the scriptures themselves shall be wrested to countenance the practice, and this text more especially be pressed into the service.

But this weapon has been many a time wrested out of their hands, tho' one wou'd think it altogether needless to prove this text can't be understood in a literal sense. A man can hardly be serious in the doing it: it is meer trifling, nothing can be more absurd than fetching an argument from hence for compelling mens consciences by outward force in the matters of religion—The use of the temporal sword to propagate the christian faith,

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faith, can never be supported by this text, if we consider,

1. The occasion on which it is used. Here is a feast to which men are invited; many of them excuse themselves, and refuse to come; go therefore, says the master to his servants, and try others; even compel them to come in. Can he mean by this, drag them by outward force and violence, beat, wound, kill them if they refuse to come? are these the methods made use of with persons when they are invited to a feast? This will further appear, if we consider,

2. The persons to whom this commission is given. These were first the apostles, and after them ordinary pastors and ministers of the gospel. Now the temporal sword was never put into the hands of ecclesiastical officers. The disciples were not entrusted with the civil power, and therefore not capable of exercising any coercive force.

3. The places where the same phrase is used, in which we are sure it can't be understood in a literal proper sense. *Saul's servants compelled him to eat (a)*. But how! sure not by any external force they used to their master; but they prevailed upon him by their arguments, and entreaties, their importunity forced him, for its said he hearkned to their voice.

The strange woman, its said, forced the young man, not by outward violence, but her fair tongue and glozing speech (b). When its said, Christ constrained or compelled his disciples to enter into a ship, we are not to suppose, he did it by any outward force and violence (c). And when *Peter* compelled the *Galatians* to judaize, it cou'd not be by any penal sanguinary laws, and the arm

(a) 1 Sam. 28. 23. (b) Prov. 7. 21. (c) Matth. 14. 22.

of the civil power; but by the force of his own example (a).

4. This appears by reason and argument. Compelling persons to religion by outward force, is contrary to the nature of man as a free agent, and to the nature of religion as its a reasonable service, and not a brutal compliance. Man's will cannot admit of compulsive violence, but must necessarily follow the dictates of his understanding; and therefore beating out his brains, can never be the way to bring him to his senses.

5. It's contrary to the will of Christ, who loves to reign over a free spontaneous people, and will have no man press'd into his service, against his own will.

6. It's contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and the way in which it was at first propagated in the world. Christ did not set up his kingdom, by killing his enemies, but dying for them. And is it likely, that he who himself endured the greatest sufferings for men, shou'd appoint others to inflict the heaviest of temporal punishments upon them? the gospel needs no such methods; the conquests it makes are not by man's might, but the power of God's spirit.

7. It's contrary (as was but hinted before) to the nature of religion, which must ever be free. Subjection that is extorted by force, and only the effect of fear, is not sincere, and will not be lasting; Christ has no joy in proselites, that in the end will be found liars.

8. It's contrary to the great golden rule of doing to others, what we wou'd they shou'd do to us. So that this can never be understood in a sense that evidently carries in it so many gross absur-

(a) Gal. 2. 14.

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dities. This indeed has been practised in the world, but by some of the worst of men. *Jehoram* a wicked king, caused the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* to commit fornication; and compelled *Judah* thereto by persecuting those that dissented from, and opposed his corrupt worship: he forced them to a compliance (a).

In the new testament during the time of *Saul's* ignorance, he persecuted the church, shut them up in prisons, punished them in their synagogues and compelled them to blaspheme (b).

The heathens oftentimes cruelly persecuted the christians; the papists have learned of them, and trod in their steps, having always been bloody persecutors of the protestants, whenever they had it in their power.

But these examples sure can never recommend the practice. If any protestants thro' a mistaken zeal, have sometimes fal'n into these methods, it's hoped they are now sensible what an iniquity it is, and will be every day more willing to leave both the principle and practise to that church, whose worship is idolatry, and it's support persecution; and rather exercise that mutual love and forbearance, the gospel every where so much recommends; and content themselves with what is intended in these words, which is not an external coercion, But

Secondly, A rational persuasion. It signifies, God's earnest desire, having made this plentiful provision, that all shou'd partake of his grace, and the blessings he has provided; and then the importunate persuasions, and powerful arguments ministers shou'd use in order to it. *Compel them to come in.* Make it necessary for them, so that they shall not be able to withstand it; commend

() 2 Chron. 21. 11.

(b) Acts 26. 9, 10, 11.

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the truth to every man's conscience, that it may prevail over the strength of their prejudices; convince them by force of right reason; overcome them by the evidence of truth, and power of importunity; back your arguments with the most winning entreaties and forcible motives. Let there be no compulsion here, but that of conviction; draw them, but with the cords of a man, and the bands of love; force them, but by the light of truth, and the power of importunity. By which I wou'd not be understood, to mean, that moral suasion is of it self sufficient to bring them in; but God will make use of this as a means, and by his blessing renders it effectual to win souls to Christ; besides the powerful arguments and importunate persuasions that ministers shou'd use, there is also intended here, the effectual prevailing motions of the spirit of God upon the heart of his elect people; the consequence of which was the wonderful success of the gospel, especially in the first preaching of it; this was so great and such multitudes were converted, that they seemed to be even forced and compelled to come in. But to descend to particulars: That sinners may be compell'd to come in, we are

I. To discover to them, and endeavour to convince them of the sinfulness, danger and misery of their present case. By this they come to see the necessity of coming in. Conviction of sin, is one step to faith in Christ. If we wou'd persuade mens wills, we must first convince their consciences. The full soul loaths the honey comb; but to the hungry man every bitter thing is sweet. Who regards the tenders of the gospel, that never felt the terror of the law? the gospel feast is despised by men full of themselves, that think and say they stand in need of nothing; but will be highly acceptable to those that are perishing with hunger. The prodigal

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digal was brought to a sense of this before he took up that resolution, *I will arise and go to my Father.* A conviction of his misery, compell'd him to come in.

Now this is the work of the spirit, ordinarily performed by the ministry of the word, one part of whose business it is, to represent to men, with all faithfulness, the truth of their case, to set it before them with all possible plainness and evidence. Thus *Peter* did by his hearers (a), he deals faithfully with them; charges their sin upon their consciences; tells them roundly of their crucifying the Lord of glory; that they had taken him with wicked hands, and slain him. The guilt of this innocent blood, lay at their door. And when they heard this, its said, they were pricked to the heart, and cried, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* what will become of us? wretches that we are to shed, the blood of the Son of God! how shall we escape the punishment so heinous a crime deserves? their consciences now are awakened, they find themselves guilty before God, and obnoxious to his wrath, and by this means are constrained to enquire after relief, and run for refuge to the hope set before them. This compels and makes it necessary for them to come in.

2. As we are to discover to men the greatness of their own danger, so to represent to them the riches of that provision, which God has made for their relief. The former conviction shews men the necessity of coming in, and this gives them the encouragement to do it. The terrors of the law are set before men to awaken their fears; and then the treasures of the gospel must be opened to encourage their hope. If we would compel them to come in, it must be by making

(a) Acts 2. 23 37.

them sensible how much they need this provision; and then by assuring them, it's every way sufficient for their entertainment. Nothing is wanting on Christ's part to make them happy. Tell them all things are ready. Justice might have prepared torments, death and destruction, but behold mercy has provided pardon, life and salvation. Wisdom's provisions are,

1. Suitable, such as we need: that exactly answer our case. In this feast we have that which is bread; real solid substantial food. All other things are but husks, that cant fill us.

2. Plenteous, in our Father's house is bread enough and to spare. Mercy for thousands. In the gospel there are unsearchable riches, with the Lord, there is plenteous redemption.

3. Free, whoever will, may come and take of this bread, this water of life freely. God is ever before hand with us, and prevents us with his grace. All things are provided without our care, made ready to our hands. Wisdom has furnished her table, mingled her wine, the provisions are suitable, plenteous and large, and may be had freely, without money without price; and the word is, *Come, for all things are now ready.* In this way, compel them to come in. Convince them of their want, and discover to them, the sufficiency of this provision. Tell them, God is abundantly willing they shou'd partake of it; he has made it on purpose for them, and such as they are. And tell them, as yet there is room for them to come in; and ask them what shou'd hinder their so doing; have they any thing to object against it?

And if any thing will, one would think this shou'd constrain them; can they withstand the force of such pleadings? must not all this grace melt them into a compliance? Is it not a most unspeakable mercy,

mercy, that God shou'd make this provision for sinners recovery, when he might justly have left them to perish in their sins? Is it not a singular mercy, that we shou'd be favoured with a revelation of this grace, and be invited to a feast, which thousands in the world never had the least hint of? and is it not wonderful grace, we shou'd be still invited to partake of this grace, which we have so often refused and turned our backs upon? that the master of the house is not risen; that the door is not shut; but mercy yet expects our return? Shou'd not this compel us to our duty? can we refuse all this grace? will not such love constrain us? Is there nothing in this that is alluring? or is there not rather something in this that cant be withstood? will none be brought hereby to argue with themselves on this wise, Has infinite goodness made all this provision, and invited me to partake of it? Is there room for me! mercy for me! poor me! so worthless, so vile a creature as I am! so great a sinner as I have been! oh! this compells me; these are arguments too forcible to be resisted; this grace, so rich so free, conquers all my power. I am even compelled by it's force; and can no longer resist, I must, I will arise and go to my Father; for how can I make light of this provision? abuse such grace and mercy? condescending, preventing, sparing, pardoning mercy? Lord thou hast overcome me by kindness; and with all thankfulness I accept this provision; again.

Thirdly, To compel them to come in, we shou'd recommend the Redeemer himself in the most engaging manner to their acceptance. Particularly the worth of his person. The greatness of his love; and the pretiousness of his benefits.

1. The worth of his person. To him they are called to come, to give up themselves, to commit the

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the keeping of their souls; in him, they are required to believe and trust. That they may be brought to this, it is necessary they have a clear discovery of the object; and in some measure, know him on whom they are to believe, that knowing what manner of person he is, they may be induced to commit the keeping of their souls to him; and therefore they are to be told, how glorious a person he is in himself, how suitable to their case; that he is able, faithful, and willing to save them.

The work of those that are the friends of the bridegroom, is to win souls to Christ; and how can they do this more effectually, than by presenting him to their view, in all his amiable and attractive excellencies? now nothing shou'd be said of him that is mean; and nothing can be said that is too much. All the rays of glory dispersed in heaven and earth, meet in his person, and are united in him as the beams are in the sun. In him there is the glory of the only begotten Son of God; the highest excellencies in heaven, and the chiefest excellencies on earth. He is the brightness of the Father's glory; the express image and character of his person: in him dwells all fulness; he is able to save to the utmost. He once died and then made atonement, he ever lives and always makes intercession: he satisfied justice on earth, and solicits mercy in heaven.

His compassions are answerable to his capacities, he is merciful as well as able: invites all to come unto him, with an assurance whoever does so, he will in no wise cast them out. The weary and heavy laden he invites by name, with a promise, they shall find rest to their souls.

And shou'd not this effectually recommend him to our trust and affection? can sinners refuse a person after all this that has been said of him?

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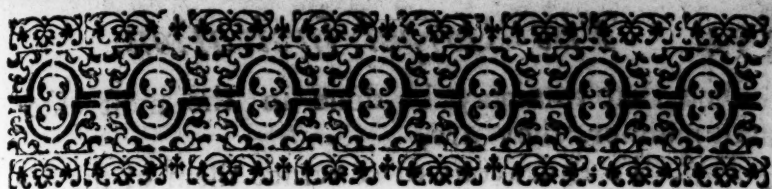
him? Is not an everlasting *Jehovah* a fit object of our trust? Is there no comeliness in the perfection of beauty, and one that is altogether lovely? Is there nothing desirable in him, who is the desire of all nations? Is this the person that invites us? and will not an invitation from such an one compel us to come in?

2. The greatness of his love. This passes knowledge, exceeds all dimensions, is unmeasurable, incomprehensible in its height, depth, length, and breadth, what tongue can express it? yea, what heart can conceive of it? heaven and earth are astonished at it. He has given us the most amazing instances of it. He poured out his soul in prayers, in tears, in blood; loved us and died for us; loved us and now pleads for us, and pleads with us.

And is there nothing in love strong as death to compel us? Shou'd not such love constrain us? did he once reveal himself to you, as he did to *Saul*, saying (a), I am Jesus whom you despise, neglect, and condemn, Jesus that loved and died for you, that gave my self, my blood, my life for you, you wou'd be compelled and overcome as he was, by this love, and brought to his foot saying, as he did, *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?*

3. The pretiousness of his benefits. These are worth more than all the world; infinitely preferable to all created things. They are but toys and trifles, dung and dross compared with these; and when we are invited to partake of them, shall it be said, we made light of them? how can we turn our backs upon favours so great in themselves and so needful for us? oh therefore, Come, come, for all things are now ready, and those well worth your acceptance.

(a) Acts 9.



THE
GOSPEL INVITATION.

S E R M O N II.

L U K E XIV. 23.

And compel them to come in, that my house may be full.



A M considering those methods which the ministers of the gospel are to make use of, to bring men to Christ, and to partake of that spiritual feast which he has provided for them.

I have shewn that they are not to offer any outward force or violence to the consciences of men, this being contrary to the nature of man as a free agent ; to the nature of religion as it is a reasonable service ; and to the express will of Christ, who would have no man press'd into his service without his consent.

But the ministers of Christ are to persuade men *to come in*, by the most powerful arguments, convincing motives ; to make it appear so necessary, that they shall in a manner be compelled to a compliance ; they are to commend the truth to every man's conscience that it may prevail over the strength of their prejudices ; and then to enforce it with those earnest entreaties which the importance of the case requires.

A a

And

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And that this may be done in the most effectual manner, they are,

First, To endeavour to convince them of the sinfulness and danger of their *not coming in*.

Secondly, To represent, the riches of that provision which God has made for them.

Thirdly, They should recommend the Redeemer himself to their acceptance; and particularly the excellency of his person, the greatness of his love and the pretiousness of his benefits.

Fourthly, In order to compel them, we are to represent the reasonableness and equity of complying on the one hand, with the unreasonableness of refusing on the other.

The reasonableness of complying, considering whose command it is, when it's said, *Come, for all things are now ready*; here is an invitation which heaven it self sends us; this is the command of God; it's he that requires this of us; and are his commands to be disputed? can any thing be more just and equal, than doing what he requires? is it not fit, the sovereign of the world shou'd be obeyed? especially when we consider what it is that he requires of us. A thing not only just and reasonable in it self; but every way to our own advantage. Had he required some great thing of us; bid us make the provision our selves; or bring thousands of rams, ten thousands of rivers of oil to purchase it of him, there might have been some pretence for refusing; but when he provides all things to our hands, tells us the table is spread with the choicest dainties, grace, mercy, pardon, peace, &c. These are all ready, nothing is required, but that you come, and accept of this provision; eat of that which is good, and let your souls delight themselves in the fatness of his house; what can be more reasonable than your complying?

And

And on the other hand, can any thing be more unreasonable than your not doing it? The great and blessed God, provides all things needful for our salvation; and then renders them, with the greatest freeness; they are all to be had without money, and without price; and you make light of all this. You will have none of God's provision, you don't need it; or you don't like it; or you have something else to mind, the farm, the oxen or merchandise. You refuse to come near him, you run from him, as if he had some ill design upon you; and offer'd you to your hurt. And can any thing be more unaccountable than such a conduct? can there be a shadow of reason to justify this behaviour? you will not come to him, that you may have life; then what's to be expected but death; but why will ye dye? is death a thing to be fond of? Oh foolish people and unwise!

Fifthly, That sinners may be compell'd to come in, we represent to them, the benefits and advantage of it. What is so much their duty, is no less their interest, they are sure to find their own account in it. The gain will certainly be their own; nothing can turn so much to their advantage.

And to convince them of this, it may not be improper to set before them the happiness of those that are enabled to comply with this call, and accept the invitation, that is given to this feast; this may be one means to induce others to their duty.

Tell them then how well they live in God's house; how well they fare at their Father's table: tho' its confess'd, one half of this can't be told 'em: eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for his children. No tongue can express, nor heart conceive, the happiness they en-

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joy in their Father's house, and at their Father's table. Blessed Souls! enriched with all things necessary to make them happy! interested in the most exalted privileges, and made partakers of the best of blessings! they have at present full provision made for them; bread enough and to spare; meat to eat the world knows not of. Their sins are all pardoned and forgiven, their persons justified and accepted with God; their natures renewed and sanctified; God is reconciled unto and at peace with them; he is become their friend, their father. They receive the adoption of sons, are emancipated and made free from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the curse of the law, so that there's no condemnation to them. So far from this, that besides what they have in hand,

There is a glorious inheritance reserved for them hereafter. God has given them grace, and he will give them glory. They are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ; and shall be as happy at last, as heaven can make them, when they shall come to know the full meaning of that astonishing expression of our Saviour, *He will make them sit down to meat, and gird himself, and come forth and serve them.* Now this honour, this happiness have all that God brings into his house; and are you content to have no lot nor portion in this matter? will you perish with hunger, whilst so many in their Father's house have bread enough and to spare? Is not this a consideration, that shou'd even compel you to come in? It did the prodigal (a). *How many hired servants in my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger,* whilst they are fed to the full, I have not bread to eat. Their souls delight themselves in fatness, when I am perishing with hunger. They live upon the rich provision of God's house, whilst

(a) Luke 15. 17.

I am

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I am feeding, or rather starving upon the husks of this world. Oh, I will arise, and go to my father. I'll never live at this rate. I'll no longer content my self with this low, fordid way of living. I'll no longer go on as I have done without God in the world. Spending my days in sin and folly; in the pursuit of a vain world: the time past of my life shall suffice to have wrought the will of the gentiles, and fulfilled the lusts of the flesh; too many pretious moments, days and years have been spent in serving divers lusts and pleasures, in revelling and excess, luxury and riot, in vain pursuits and sinful pleasures; what fruit can there be in those things which one must be ashamed of upon a serious review, and can't be reflected on without the keenest resentments? Oh! this poor, ignoble, miserable way of living! how unworthy of, and unbecoming a rational being; a thinking creature? I'll live no longer at this distance from God, but arise and go to my father! and where this is done, how happy the change! Then comes the fatted calf the best robe for him that before was starving for lack of bread? now there is the truest joy and fullest mirth, since he that was dead is alive; and the soul that was lost is found.

And should not this compel others to come in, that they may share the same felicity? The advantage redounds to themselves; they reap the benefit of it, and will have cause to rejoyce in it to eternity. It will be no grief of heart that ever it was done; all the sorrow will be that they neglected it so long, did it no sooner. Their souls bless the day, the hour in which God opened their eyes, brought them first to themselves, and then into his house.

Sixthly, In order to the bringing persons in, we are to represent to them, the necessity of it. It's a

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thing that can't be dispensed with, and therefore admits of no excuse. It is not an arbitrary thing, left to mens choice whether they will do it or no, that may be done; but of indispensable necessity, that must be done, if ever we expect to please God or save our souls. It is not so necessary that we live and breathe, as that we believe on the Son of God. We want a Saviour and his benefits for our souls, more than air or food for our bodies. The necessity of it appears in these two things,

- I. The refusing of this, contracts the greatest guilt. And therefore
- II. Brings the most certain and dreadful ruin.

I. It contracts the greatest guilt. Say not, suppose we don't come, where's the harm of it? Indeed, if it were so, you might have some excuse. But this is far from being the case. If you refuse this invitation, it will be highly resented by the master of the feast; he must needs take it ill at your hands, and be sorely displeased at the contempt you cast upon his provision. What reflects upon him the greatest dishonour, must needs give him the highest provocation. May not he well be angry at a conduct, that throws dirt in the face of all his perfections? that asperses his wisdom, denies his truth, abuses his patience, and above all despises his grace and mercy? do you thus requite the Lord? is this a suitable return for all his kindness? to make light of the greatest instance of wisdom and goodness; despise the richest provision, and prefer other things, before them; *the farm, the merchandise, &c.* Are you not afraid to bring all this guilt upon your head? will you spurn at the bowels, that yern towards you, and despise an entertainment, which
angels

angels admire, and devils envy? oh that men shou'd be deaf as adders to these charms of love, and blind as moles under such beams of light! if the mercy that offers all this, be a miracle of goodness, the sin that despises it, must be a wonder of wickedness. And therefore

2. This guilt brings on a most certain and dreadful ruin. It brings on

Certain ruin. How should it be otherwise? which way can they escape destruction, that neglect the only means of salvation! the apostle puts it to them, how shall we escape (a), let any man or angel tell if he can. There is but one way of escape, and that they neglect; what remains then but certain and unavoidable ruin? which must also needs be,

Dreadful and intolerable. The sin of such is seven times blacker, and therefore their hell seven times hotter; for the punishment must be proportionable to the crime: it will be much more tolerable in the day of judgment for those that never heard of this feast, than for those who tho' often invited to it, always neglected it, turned their backs upon it, said it's not worth having; they don't need it, they won't accept it. In this case, mercy it self becomes their enemy; and then there is nothing left to befriend them, none to take their part, or plead their cause; their ruin is certain, unavoidable, and intolerable, and shou'd not the consideration of this compel them to come in?

Seventhly, For this purpose, we shou'd endeavour to remove all hinderances out of the way of their coming in. After all that has been said, many things will arise in the minds of Men, to hinder their compliance. They that were first invited, its said, *with one consent began to make excuse.* When

(a) Heb. 2. 3.

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they should with one heart and voice, agree to accept the invitation, with one consent they began to frame excuses for the neglect of it; they were not at leisure, they had not time; other things lay upon their hands, and called them another way. Have me excused says one, and pray excuse me says another; others have more need, and more leisure than I have; I can't come for this reason says one, and another for that reason.

And as it was then, we may reasonably suppose it would be afterwards; for that answer describes the prevailing temper of mankind in all the ages of the world. Some thing or other they will have to plead as an excuse for the neglect of their duty: some objections or other still lye against it. Now that they may be compelled to come in, it's necessary to answer these pleas and remove such obstacles out of the way, as would hinder their coming in.

Thus then stands the case, you are invited by a great King, no less than the great God, to a noble and magnificent entertainment; he sends out his servants saying, *Come, for all things are now ready.* What have you to say, why you should not accept this invitation? what objections have you against believing in the Son of God; produce your cause, bring forth your strong reasons. Now these objections arise in some from downright atheism and infidelity: in others from manifest profaneness and impiety. In some from common presumption and carnal confidence; in some from prevailing sensuality and love of this present world, and lastly, in others from slavish fears and self-diffidence.

And that they may be compelled to come in, it's necessary to beat them out of these strong holds, and remove these difficulties out of their way,

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way. That they may come in, the way of the Lord must be prepared ; hills, must be levell'd and made low ; valleys exalted ; crooked things made straight ; and rough places plain. And this shall be attempted, under the following heads.

Obj. 1. These objections arise in some from downright atheism and infidelity. They believe nothing at all of the matter but entertain the whole with contempt and make a meer jest of it, they laugh at all the talk of a gospel feast ; and make themselves merry with an invitation to things that have no subsistence. The whole gospel, with them is a meer fable ; the feast it self a fancy ; and faith in it, all whim and folly. I dont suppose I am now speaking to any such. But were I so,

Resp. I would beg of these, not to pronounce against God, and themselves, with this air of assurance and satisfaction.

Can they really perswade themselves there is no God ? if indeed there is no God, whence then came this world, and all things in it ? how came they themselves to be ? whence had they these very powers, with which they reason after this manner ? were all these things from eternity, and without beginning ? or did they fall into this order, and train of succession, by meer chance ? where is the reason ; where is the sense of denying one evident and easy principle, and admitting at the same time a thousand of the grossest absurdities, that cou'd be obtruded upon the world ?

If then there be a first cause, a God, he is certainly to be worshipped and obeyed ; but how shall this ever be done acceptably, unless he himself directs us to the way in which he will be feared ? and can we suppose a being of such goodness and wisdom, would always or at any time leave the world without some discovery of his mind and their du-
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ty in this matter, that he shou'd never tell them, what he requires of them; or what they may expect from him? but leave them to the most uncertain and uncomfortable conjectures? Now if this is not to be supposed; but there is a revelation; where is it to be found but in our bibles? what ever had any pretensions to it like this? And if this book be what it pretends to be; as we have the greatest assurance it is, then the gospel is no fable, the feast is no fancy, to be made a jest of and laughed at. Nothing is more expressly required than our believing on the Son of God, whom he has sent into the world: and the refusing him this homage, is not arguing from reason, but the lusts of men.

Obj. 2. In some this arises from prophaneness and impiety. Be the revelation true or false it's pretty much at one to them; for they resolve never to comply with it; and the reason is, *they have loved strangers, and after them they will go.* They have loved their lusts, and them they will fulfill. They must have their pleasures and delights, these are things they relish and taste, but as for a spiritual feast, a banquet for souls, they despise it as prophane *Esau* did his birthright.

Resp. But what monstrous impiety; what vile ingratitude is this? for men thus to treat the God that made them, and does daily preserve and uphold them! without whom, they had never been in a capacity of saying so much as this, *we will not come unto him.* Besides this is downright madness and folly. You will not accept the salvation of Christ; you will not have him to reign over you! you will have your lusts, your pleasures! and what will all this issue in? hear the righteous but dreadful doom! As for those that were bidden, but refused to come, none of 'em *shall taste of my supper.* Bring hither *those mine enemies, that wou'd*

not I should reign over them, and slay them before my face (a).

But all this is nothing to them; they care not what becomes of them hereafter, so they may have their will here; being fearless of that wrath, which makes the devils tremble.

But notwithstanding all this boldness, and as stout as they are now; the mournful cry at last will be, *who among us can dwell with devouring flames? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?* they shall find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; who will then demand of 'em in those pungent questions, *can thine heart endure, or thy hands be strong in the day, that I shall deal with thee?* how much better then is it to be wise in time; and kiss the son, lest they perish from the way, when his anger be kindled but a little: for blessed are they and only they, that put their trust in him.

Obj. 3. This refusal arises in some from common presumption and carnal confidence, they have a fond conceit of themselves; and fancy they have all the faith they need, they thank God this is not now to do; they are all christians, and what more wou'd you have of them.

Resp. What *Moses* said in another case, I wou'd apply to this, would to God all the Lord's people were prophets; wou'd to God, all that make this reply were indeed christians; not only almost, but together so: but alas! all are not Israel, that are of Israel. Many baptized christians, want faith as much as unbaptized pagans. It's as hard to convince some people they want faith, as it is to persuade some they have it. This vain conceit is that fatal engine, by which the devil ruins thousands of souls. A conceit they have faith already, keeps them from believing at all. This staves

off convictions; renders the word ineffectual; and hardens them in their impenitency. This gives a fair occasion to enquire how they came by their faith? was it born and bread up with them, they know not how? what did it cost them to obtain it? were they ever convinced of sin, and especially of unbelief? what does their faith do for them? does it purify their hearts, work by love? overcome their lusts? conquer the world? or does it suffer them to proceed in a course of sin?

What do they do by their faith? do they live by it? many upon all occasions swear by their faith, a strong suspicion they have no faith: for if they had, they would live by it; but not swear by it. This was once the apostle Paul's case; I was, says he, *alive without the law; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died (a)*. Laodicea said she was rich, increased in goods, and stood in need of nothing (b), she had all the faith, the repentance, the conversion, she needed; but this was only in her own conceit, for Christ tells her, *thou art poor, blind, naked and in the want of all things*.

If this be your case; may the Lord open your eyes before its too late; and not suffer you to go out of the world under this fatal delusion. May he give you to understand the nature of faith; what it is, wherein it consists, that you may not conclude you have already believed; only because you dont know what it is to believe.

(a) Rom. 7. 9. (b) Rev. 3. 17.



THE
GOSPEL INVITATION.

S E R M O N III.

LUKE XIV. 23.

And compel them to come in, that my house may be full.

HAVING gone thro' the several arguments which the ministers of Christ are to make use of, in order to compel sinners to come to him and accept of the entertainment he has provided for them in the gospel; I attempted to answer the objections they might raise against this part of their duty.

Obj. 1. Some excuse themselves from a principle of downright infidelity; because they believe nothing of the matter; they hardly believe there is a God, much less that the gospel is a divine revelation, they make a jest of the gospel feast, and can hardly be serious when they hear of an invitation to things which they apprehend have no subsistence.

Obj. 2. Others are influenced against all arguments we can make use of, by prophaneness and impiety, they love their lusts and them they will fulfill: but as for a spiritual feast, designed to entertain them with spiritual delights and pleasures, they have no notion of it, and therefore excuse themselves from coming to it.

Obj.

Obj. 3. Others are under the government of presumption and self confidence, they have as much faith, as they want, being born of christian parents, and baptized into the christian faith, and therefore they have nothing more to do.

Obj. 4. This refusal in others arises from sensuality and love of this present world. Its pleasures profits and honours. These alledge many things against complying herewith. As

Plea. 1. This will expose them to many hazards and inconveniencies. They must expect sufferings, losses; at least the trial of cruel mockings, scorn and reproaches; to be made a by word and derision of the people. It's a sect at first every where spoken against; and the keeping up religion in its power will not have the world's good word now, however men may escape with the form. Now

These are things, it must be owned, that human nature is sensibly touch'd with; and they are especially ungrateful to young people, and persons of distinction in the world. Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?

Resp. 1. But Christ's terms, must not be brought down to induce any man to list in his service. Converts are not made to Christ by gospel ministers, as among the *Indians* by popish missionaries, who hide from them the cross, and calculate a religion for their outward ease. Our Saviour draws no men into his service, by concealing from them what they are sure to meet with in it: but deals openly and above board with them; these things I have told you before, to prevent any offence hereafter, they shall put you out of their synagogues, and not barely excommunicate you; but the time will come, when thro' the fury and blindness of bigotry, they shall think they do God good service in killing you. If then we will be his disciples indeed, we must deny our selves, take up our cross

cross and follow him. These are things we must expect and be contented to meet with: the world will hate you, it hated him and can't be supposed to love his. All men, the basest of the people, will think their tongues are their own to say what they will, and speak all manner of evil of you, if you are the faithful followers of Christ. But

Resp. 2. There is notwithstanding all this, infinitely more to be gained in the service of Christ than can be lost by it. When *Amaziah* was commanded to dismiss the auxiliary troops, he had hired out of the kingdom of *Israel*, he makes this objection, *but what shall we do for the hundred talents*, which it seems he had remitted to them for advance money? to which he receives this satisfactory answer, *the Lord is able to give thee much more than this* (a). Such an objection men often make against their duty, they are afraid of losing by it; but this should satisfy us, whatever damage or loss we sustain in the service of God; he is able to make it up abundantly to our advantage. None shall be losers by him. God is able to give us much more than we part with for our religion. No man, says our Lord, (and can't we take his word?) hath forsaken house or lands, brethren or sisters for my sake or the gospel's, but shall receive an hundred fold in this world, and in that to come life everlasting (b). What wou'd it profit a man on the one hand, if he gain the world and lose his soul; and on the other what wou'd it hurt a man, if he lose the world and save his soul? the distinctions of time, will soon be swallowed up in eternity; a little while, and it will be much at one, whether we were princes on thrones, or beggars on a dunghill. The grandeur of some, and the meanness of others, will be

(a) 2 Chron. 25. 8, 9. (b) Matth. 19. 29.

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as much forgot, as if they had never been: but the distinction between persons as good or bad will remain for ever. Let us then balance accounts and see if upon making them up, the smiles of a God, will not more than recompence the frowns of men; and his favour, make us an abundant amends for all the world's hatred besides.

Resp. 3. Did our Saviour start such difficulties, and make these objections against his undertaking the work of our redemption? did not he bear the contradiction of sinners? was not he made the jest and scorn of the people? he endured the cross and despised the shame, and shou'd not the same mind be in us? shall we be afraid of any reproaches or sufferings we may undergo for his sake? Again,

Resp. 4. Had we not better bear the reproaches of men for doing our duty, than lye under the lash of our conscience for the neglect of it? be assured conscience will bear harder upon us, and be a more severe reprovcr than the tongues of all the scorers in the world; and are we willing to lye under these eternal reproaches, only to avoid for a time the senseless revilings of stupid sinners? But others plead,

Plea. 2. They are not so apprehensive of trouble; this may possibly be avoided; but strict religion is too severe a thing to be complied with. They must by this be abridg'd of their beloved pleasures; things dearer to them than their lives. They must cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes; be mortified to the delights and pleasures of this world; which they can never be reconciled unto. But

Resp. 1. Christ's yoke must not be made lighter by others, than he has made it himself. He insists upon it, that we be holy as he is holy; that we walk circumspectly, redeeming the time; that we work out our salvation with fear and trembling;

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ling; that we deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and live soberly righteously and godly in this present evil world; that we have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them; these things he insists upon; *every one that names the name of Christ, must depart from all iniquity*; for he redeems his people from a vain conversation; and came to save them from their sins, not in them. This is the yoke he puts upon their necks.

Resp. 2. But then, its certain there's nothing hard or unreasonable in all this. His yoke is easy, and his burden light. He calls us to no duty, but what's at the same our interest; nor does he require us to forego any thing, but what its our advantage to part with; and we should gladly be separated from, as that which is the disease and would be the destruction of our souls. Besides,

Resp. 3. You will certainly find truer and greater pleasures in the exercises of religion, than ever can be enjoyed in the service of sin. There is more pleasure in crucifying a lust, than fulfilling it; as it is better to take away the cause of an immoderate thirst, than be always drinking to satisfy it. Believe it, there are no pleasures equal to those a holy soul finds in loving, and serving, and enjoying his God; nor does any man taste true pleasures, till he feeds upon the delights* there are in conversing with heaven and heavenly things: spiritual comforts infinitely exceed carnal sensual gratifications. A day, an hour in God's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. Wisdom's ways, are ways of pleasantness (a).

If any ask, but is this possible! can it be that there's any such pleasure in religion! all the answer, I

(a) Prov. 3. 17.

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shall return, is Come and see. Make the experiment, and you will then be convinced. Oh ! that you did taste, then you wou'd see that the Lord is gracious ; that his ways are pleasant. And as wisdom's ways are pleasant, so

Her paths are peace. There must needs be that peace in the discharge of a duty, which a man can never find in the commission of sin. *Great peace have they that love,* and therefore keep, *thy law* (a) ; with God, with themselves, with their own consciences. And a quiet mind, is worth more than all the world. The pleasures of sin are soon over, and when the honey is gone, always leave a sting behind them ; whereas the exercises of religion, give the greatest pleasure in the action, and the highest satisfaction in the review. There are a thousand things in the world (plays, interludes, vain frothy conversation, prophane jests, sensual gratifications, &c.) that divert a man for the present ; but afterwards leave him the more sad ; nay sometimes even in the midst of all this laughter, the heart is sorrowful ; whereas wisdom's ways are both pleasant and peaceable.

Plea. 3. Others plead the want of time and opportunity. They have not leisure for this so burdensome and laborious an affair ; and therefore desire to be excused. I can't come, says one, I have bought a piece of land and must go and see it (b) ; another has bought so many yoke of oxen, and must go to prove them ; so they went their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, being too busy to come to the feast. They were lost in the labyrinth of this world ; and had no time to look after and secure their main interests.

Resp. But is it so indeed ? can this be pretended with so much as an appearance of truth ? let me ask

(a) Psal. 119. 165. (b) Matth. 18. 19.

1. Have we not time for other things of far less importance? not only to eat, drink and sleep, things that are necessary, and must be done; but for recreations, games, sports, and visits, don't much of our time run waste in these things? and having so much time for them; might not some of it be redeemed for God, and religion and the affairs of another world? so that it's to be feared,

2. That this neglect arises from want of inclination, rather than opportunity. The plea is your want of time; but the truth is you want a heart. And if so,

3. How will you answer it another day to God and your own consciences, that you could find time for every thing but your duty? How will this look when you are entering upon the eternal world, I had time for every thing but God? To eat, drink, sleep, buy, sell, play, &c. but none to pray, hear, read, examine my self, to meditate on divine things, and prepare for another world, and make ready for death and judgment: other things were minded with great application; but no care taken of an immortal soul. What comfort can there be in such a reflection. In short then,

4. It's in vain to make this excuse, where the thing is of such necessity and importance as this is. It admits of no excuse; it's a thing that must be done; and you must find time to do it, or perish for ever.

Plea. 4. Some pretend it's too soon to come; and it may be done time enough hereafter. They are young, and have a great deal of time before them. This is too serious a thing for their green heads. They are too young to mind such things. A little more sleep, a little slumber and folding the hands, a little more of the liberties of life, and the pleasures of the world. But

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Resp. Can it be too soon to engage in a work of such vast concern? in far lesser matters we all agree, that delays are dangerous: and ought we not much rather to think so in the present case? can we be safe and happy too soon? too soon out of the danger of hell? beyond the hurt of death, and the grave? at peace with God, and in the arms of Christ? Besides,

Are you sure of time for this hereafter, dost thou know what a day may bring forth? if not why boastest thou of to morrow? of what you will do to morrow; how many have been surprized by a sudden and unexpected stroke? therefore take heed of this delusion, thousands perish with thoughts and promises of doing, what they never had an opportunity or a heart to perform. To day then whilst it is called to day hear his voice. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Hereafter it may be too late.

Obj. 5. In others these objections arise from fear and despondency. And some of these plead,

Plea. 1. They dare not come; because they are so unworthy and unprepared; they are not fit to come; having been guilty of the most heinous sins and provocations; sins that are gross in their own nature, or highly aggravated by their circumstances, as being committed against light, knowledge, education, mercies, vows, convictions, and checks of conscience; is so vile and loathsome a creature fit to partake of such precious things? sure so sinful a wretch can never hope to be admitted into God's house.

Resp. But in answer to this, consider Christ requires no fitness but willingness. He invites you to come, and will make you wellcome tho' you have nothing to bring. Who had a greater sense of unworthiness, than the prodigal? and yet he says within himself I will arise and go to my father: he

he did so, and how he was received you well know. Again consider, It's not unworthiness but unwillingness that hinders our acceptance with God. And who ever was worthy that did come to God? nay whom did he ever receive that were not really unworthy, and judged themselves so? even some of the most unworthy, the very chief of sinners: moreover,

The greater your sins have been, the more need you have to come. And you are as freely invited as any, tho' your sins are as scarlet, God has promised to make them white as snow. Whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out.

But it's farther pleaded they are afraid to come because so unprepared. The blessings of the gospel are not given to the worthy but they are given to the hungry and thirsty, to humble, broken hearted, penitent sinners. Now tho' they had been some of the chief of sinners, yet if they were sensible sinners, there would be some hope concerning them: but alas! their hearts are as hard as the nether mill-stone; repentance is hid from their eyes, they have not the qualifications of mourners, and therefore are not prepared to come; and for that reason are afraid to come.

Resp. But is it so indeed, that you have no sense of sin? do you feel nothing of it's weight and load? whence come all those complaints? this self loathing and abhorrence? if so, as is evident from the objection, let it be remembred, God does not insist on a certain degree of humiliation, and previous conviction; but only so much as is necessary in the nature of the thing, to give you a sense of your misery, and shew the need of a Saviour. Again what is objected as an hindrance to your coming, is only to be had in a way of coming to Christ. And tho' you are not fit for him, he is fit for you. Be willing then to

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take all from the hand of meer mercy, and to be saved purely upon the score of free grace, and expect not by your qualifications to recommend your selves to the divine favour. Shou'd men be called to great privileges and dignities by their superiors, we rarely find persons so full of modesty on pretence of unworthiness to refuse a good offer, and complement themselves into inconveniencies; they who did so in the case of secular advantages and preferments, wou'd be thought more nice than wise. Learn then from these, and don't complement your selves out of your salvation.

Plea. 2. Others plead they can't come. The former object unworthiness and these impotency. They are unable to come, they cannot repent; they cannot believe.

Resp. It's a mercy to be sensible of this, if you are really so. It's one step to faith, to be sensible we have it not, and of our selves cannot believe. But

Are you really willing and desirous to believe? have you ever begged in good earnest, that God would enable you to believe; and give you that repentance and faith he requires? if not, will you be able to plead this at the last day, Lord I would have come but cou'd not, I had not power of my self, and thou wast not pleased to give it. No every mouth then will be stop'd. Thou wilt hereafter stand speechless. It will be found, tho' the want of power was the pretended cause, want of will was the real one.

But if this be a real conviction and there are true desires in you, to come, you have cause to bless God for it; this is much better than the common conceit, that it's easy to believe; every man has a power to do it; this, as was said before, is one step to faith. And for your encouragement, God has promised his spirit and grace, to enable you

to believe, he has exalted his Son to give repentance, as well as remission: turn you at my reproof; behold I will pour out my spirit upon you (a).

Plea. 3. Some object, it's now too late. Having stood out so long, their time is now past. They were called upon to seek the Lord while he might be found, and call upon him while he was near; but having neglected this, they can't suppose God will accept of such a late return as theirs must be.

Resp. See by this how the evil one imposes upon poor souls. Sometimes, he tells them it's too soon, and this takes with young people; and having persuaded them to delay from time to time, at last he tells them it's too late; now there is no hope.

It must be owned, where persons have gone on many years in a wilful neglect and refusal of the repeated calls of God's word, it's matter of deep humbling and a very discouraging circumstance. God might justly say, because I called, and you refused, therefore you shall call, and I will not answer. He might justly pronounce this dreadful sentence, They are joyned to idols, let them alone. They wou'd none of me, nor hearken to my counsel, so I gave them up to their own hearts lusts.

But tho' there is so much ground for humiliation, there is no cause for despondency; so long as the master of the house is not risen and has not shut to the door, yet there is room for the exercise of your repentance and God's mercy. Therefore make the adventure, whatever you have been or done, tho' it be at the eleventh hour you come in, he will in no wise cast you out; behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man, at whose door I have long stood knocking, will

(a) Prov. 1. 23.

open to me, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me.

Plea. 4. Some of this character plead, If they shou'd come to Christ, they are afraid they shall never abide with him, they are loth to engage in a strict profession of religion, lest they shou'd not hold out to the end, for it had been better never to have begun, than not to persevere, better not have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment; for the latter end of such is worse than their beginning. Besides they have known some whose goodness was but as the morning cloud, and early dew that soon pass'd away. Some young saints, have prov'd little better than old devils.

Angelicus juvenis senibus satanizat in annis.

And knowing they are liable to the same temptation, and have in them as strong corruptions, they are not without fears, this may prove their own case.

Resp. It's good to be jealous over our selves with a godly jealousy. There have been dreadful instances of apostacy in the church. Giddy and unstable souls, take up a profession in haste, without thought, and without considering the cost, set out with great eagerness and zeal; but through the power of temptation and the deceitfulness of sin, have turned aside from a fair profession; their goodness indeed, was no other than like a morning cloud.

But this sure shou'd be no hindrance to your embracing the gospel. The fear of a sin hereafter shou'd not discourage us from our duty at present.

It's

It's possible a young professor may prove an old devil ; but a young disciple and a true convert, if he lives, shall have the honour of being an old disciple.

Let this only make you more careful in setting out ; see to it that yours is a real conversion ; dig deep ; lay a good foundation, and then you are under the security of an everlasting covenant. Never go forth in your own strength ; but be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ, look unto him, the author and finisher of your faith : and fear not to make a beginning, since you have this assurance, that he who begins a good work, will perform it to the day of Jesus Christ. And you shall be more than conquerors thro' him that has loved you.

Thus then by removing the difficulties that lye in the sinners way, we endeavour to compel them to come in, leaving no room for them to object, nor any thing to plead in excuse for their neglect that is defensible.

Having been so large in the doctrinal parts, I shall be the shorter in the third thing ; Application.

1. *Use.* How deeply then is the nature of man corrupted ! compel them to come in ! But sure there will be no occasion for this. They will come, upon the first invitation ; nay it might be expected, they will even force themselves in ; as persons do on the like occasions. There is no need of much rhetorick to perswade a condemned man to accept of a pardon, when it's freely offered. A man starving for want of bread, wont need many arguments to prevail with him, to sit down to a full table ; but in this case men must be compelled to come ; instead of becoming humble suiters to Christ, and begging to be admitted, they must be entreated, and beseech'd to accept of what he has provided so much at his own cost,
and

and for their happiness; and all little enough, yea without his grace too little, such is the ignorance and darkness of man's mind; such the perverseness of his will! he must even be compelled to be happy.

Use. 2. This shews the great design, and usefulness of the gospel ministry. The servants are sent out to persuade men to accept the provisions of God's grace. To argue, reason, plead with them, pray, beseech, even compel them; make it necessary; so necessary, that they may not be able to resist the call.

Preaching the word is the outward means of salvation. God's drawing, is by man's teaching. They are compelled to come in; but in a way congruous to their nature, without offering violence to their wills. He draws them with the cords of a man.

Use 3. The necessity of a divine concurrence with humane endeavours. God sends out his servants, saying, compel them to come in, but who is sufficient for this? are they able to do it! can they open a blind eye! unstop a deaf ear! bow a stubborn will? is this in their power! no they can but propound and offer arguments, not convince nor persuade by any force there is in their reasoning; the success of all depends upon the concurring efficacy of God's grace. It's his power not man's arguments that make a willing people, moral suasion is not sufficient of it self to bring men to their duty. They wont be reasoned into a compliance; these are but means, the success of which entirely depends upon that blessing from God, which we are to hope and pray for. For want of this how few, after all that has been said, are prevailed upon? Who hath believed our report? because there are so few to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. Israel's not gathered, souls are not

not compelled, God's house is not filled; this is, and shou'd be for a lamentation.

Use. 4. Be perswaded then to accept this great salvation. Come, for all things are ready. Once more we make an attempt, may the blessed Spirit affect the mind, and assist the tongue of the speaker, and may the same almighty Spirit incline the ear and touch the heart of the hearers. May he direct the net in this throw after many hours toiling in vain, to the right side, that some at least yea many souls might be inclosed.

In the bowels of Christ, by the mercies of God, once more you are besought to suffer the word of exhortation; and let not God have cause to complain, all the day long I have spread out my hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people. I have called but they have refused, that man who sits here, that woman that stands there refused to come; would none of me; none of my Son, none of my supper. God forbid!

Yet there is room; in his heart, his covenant, his mercy, his house; he has reserved mercies for thousands, besides all that he has bestowed on thousands; he wou'd have his house filled; it is your privilege, your duty to come in. You are entreated and beseeched to do it; and will you refuse? others can perswade you, tho' it be to your hurt; if sinners entice you saying, come let's have your company, cast in your lot amongst us, go with us to such an entertainment, you easily consent. And will you only be deaf to the calls of God! will no arguments of his prevail with you! shall he open his bosome, and you turn your backs! he offers pearls of the greatest price; and will you tread them under foot with the profanest contempt? Christ opens his wounds, and you make them bleed a fresh? he lifts up his voice, and you stop your ears? he entreats you, by his tears, his blood

blood and passion, by all that is dear, to accept his benefits, and you reject them with contempt, as things not worth your acceptance?

Oh! that these things might at length sink into your hearts; and bring you to cry out, how forcible are right words? oh! the power of divine grace! I am overcome, convinced, persuaded, even *compelled to come in.*





A F U N E R A L
S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the
Much lamented DEATH

Of the late REVEREND

Mr. *Matthew Clarke*,

Who departed this Life, *March 27.*
1726. An. Aetatis. LXII.

By DANIEL NEAL, *A. M.*

MATTHEW XXV. 21.

His Lord said unto him, Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

IT is a very afflicting consideration to think in whose place I now stand, and of the melancholy occasion that has brought me hither; if the art of physicians, or the prayers and intercessions of the people of God could have

have prevailed, you had still enjoyed the labours of your late reverend and worthy pastor; but since the will of God has determined otherwise, it is our duty to be silent, and to improve in the best manner we can, the awful providence.

The kingdom of heaven, or the coming of the Son of man, is compared in this chapter to a master of a family travelling into a far country, who at his departure called his servants together, and delivered them certain talents to improve according to their abilities, to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to a third one. The master of the family in the parable is Christ, the servants are his disciples, and followers, and more especially ministers. By the master's travelling into a far country, we may understand our Saviour's ascension into heaven to receive a kingdom, and his continuing there till the restitution of all things: the talents, are spiritual gifts, or capacities for service, which are wisely distributed according to mens abilities. Some learned men are of opinion that our Saviour had his eye upon the several orders of persons in his church; that, to his apostles he gave five talents, to the seventy, who had received fewer spiritual gifts, two talents, and to the rest of his disciples but one. But others, with greater certainty, understand it of the various distributions of divine favours amongst mankind, in which the great God acts as a sovereign, dividing to every man severally as he pleases; some have more of the gifts of nature and grace than others, according to the determinations of infinite wisdom; but every man has some talent to trade with, and consequently some account to give of his improvement. 'Tis evident from this parable that all our abilities and capacities of service are from God, and therefore they

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are called *his goods* (a). As the author of nature, he has all the stores of providence in his hand, and as the God of grace, his people receive out of his fulness grace for grace. Now as men are distinguished by their talents, God expects a proportionable improvement, for *where much is given, much is required*; accordingly, he that had received five talents in the parable, gained five more, and he that had two, made them two more; for tho' our talents are the gift of God, they are not given us to do with as we will; but in trust, and with a charge to improve them in our master's service; ministers therefore are called stewards of the manifold grace of God, as private christians are of their estates, and of all the moral and divine favours conferred upon them. And it is of great consequence how we behave in our several stations of service, because we are accountable to our Lord and master, who will summon us before his tribunal to give an account of every thing we have done in the body. This is fully asserted in the parable, *After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them* (b). No particular time is mentioned, but it was at their Lord's pleasure, who appoints some a longer, and others a shorter time of service, at the end of which, every one must give an account of himself to God: tho' the great and final day of reckoning will not be till the general resurrection, when *All that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation* (c).

The parable proceeds with the account the several servants gave of their trust to their Lord, and their Lord's sentence; I have no occasion to

(a) Ver. 14. (b) Ver. 19. (c) John v. 28, 29.

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look any farther than the first, because the words of my text are the sentence which Christ pronounced upon him; *Lord, says the servant, thou deliveredst me five talents; behold I have gained besides them, five more:* "I have employed my time and "strength according to my poor abilities in thy "service; I have traded with the talents, and "thro' a divine blessing on my endeavours, it "has turned to some account; for with the five "talents thou deliveredst me, I have gained five "more." Then follows his Lord's approbation, *Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

For the improvement of this subject, I would consider these three things:

First, The character and commendation of the person, a good and faithful servant.

Secondly, His Lord's approbation of him, well done; thou hast been faithful over a few things.

Thirdly, The reward of his faithfulness, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

First, I am to consider the character and commendation of the person, a good and faithful servant. All true christians are the servants of Christ; for his servants we are, to whom we obey; but the ministers of Christ are his servants in a higher sense, because they are solemnly devoted to the sacred work, and are employed in the more immediate services of his house: besides they act in commission from him, and are his ambassadors to declare his mind and will to the world; the apostles therefore in their several epistles, style themselves the servants of Christ; and their successors, the

the ministers of the gospel in every age, may be allowed to say of themselves, *now then we are ambassadors for Christ*; we are his ministers and servants, and tho' many that call themselves christians despise our character, yet we are humbly bold to magnify our office; for if it be an honour to be an ambassador to an earthly prince, it must be a greater honour to be an ambassador of Christ, who is *King of nations and King of saints*, and has said concerning his faithful ministers, *he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*

But the servant in my text is farther recommended by these two characters, his goodness and his fidelity.

First, he is called a good servant; which must include these three particulars;

First, a good servant of Christ must be a good man, in a state of favour and acceptance with God, *justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the spirit of our God.* He must have a vital principle of grace in his heart, his soul must be renewed after the divine image, and his affections set upon things above; he should have an experimental acquaintance with the operations of the Holy Spirit in opening the eyes of the blind, and in turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; without this, his heart will not be in his work, nor can he expect to do good to souls. External gifts and qualifications for the ministerial service, are necessary in their places; but *if we have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though we could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, or a vital principle of the love of God and our neighbour in our hearts, we are nothing.* I am sensible the greatest part of the world have little regard to this; men are brought
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up to the ministry as to a trade, and enter upon the sacred work chiefly with an eye to the preferments annexed to it. But it is impossible with me, that an unconverted person can be a good servant of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, A good servant of Christ should be of a good spirit, that is, of a good temper and disposition: the same spirit that was in Christ, should adorn the lives and conversations of his servants: now the spirit of Christ was meek and gentle, humble and compassionate, full of mercy and good-works, with all which he had a becoming zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls; he loved his very enemies, and was always ready to forgive them, *when he was reviled, he reviled not again, and when he suffered, he threatened not*; his heavenly soul was void of all the black passions of malice, wrath, envying, and evil-speaking; but was filled with universal love and goodness. *Such an high priest*, says the apostle, *became us*, and such a spirit is the glory and ornament of his faithful servants. *He that has knowledge*, says the wise man, *spareth his words, and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit*. And what that excellent spirit is, in a minister of Christ, we may learn from the apostle *Paul*, *the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if peradventure, God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth* (a).

Thirdly, A good servant of Christ, must have good abilities for his work; for every good man is not fit to make a good minister; the Lord in the parable considered the abilities of his servants, when he gave them their talents; to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to a third one;

(a) 1 Tim. 2. 24.

to every man according to his several abilities (a). I have not time to set before you the several abilities, which are requisite to a good servant of Christ in the work of the ministry; but amongst others, these are certainly of consequence: A thorough acquaintance with the holy scriptures, to enable him to distinguish between truth and error; an ability to defend the truths of the gospel against their adversaries; an aptness to teach, so as to enter into the conscience of a secure sinner, and to bind up the broken-hearted penitent, which requires the tongue of the learned, according to the prophet *Isaiah, the Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary* (b). To all which may be added, a skilful discerning of the times in general, and of the particular circumstances of those to whom we minister; for there may be some particular times which may require our enforcing some doctrines and duties of religion more than others; and every good minister is a watchman, to blow the trumpet and sound the alarm, when he is apprehensive of danger. Happy is the man that hath these talents, and happy the people that are blessed with such a good servant of Jesus Christ!

But, *Secondly*, the servant in my text is not only commended for his goodness, but for his fidelity; which includes these two things:

First, Uprightness and integrity of mind; for a deceitful person cannot make a faithful servant; he may impose upon the world, and gain the applause of his fellow-servants; but it must be at the expence of his Master's interest; these the apostle calls, eye-servants and men-pleasers; many of whom will say to Christ, at the last day,

(a) Ver. 15.

(b) Isa. l. 4.

Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out Devils, and done many wonderful works : But he will profess to them, he never knew them. Christ looks at the principles from which his servants act, and the views they have in the several parts of their service ; 'tis easy for a minister to accommodate himself to the taste of his hearers ; but then what will become of his fidelity to his Lord and master ? *Do I seek to please men,* says the apostle *Paul, for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ* (a) ? We may please our friends as far as we can with a good conscience ; but when this is inconsistent with our duty to Christ, we ought to renounce all worldly interests, that we may retain our integrity. This was the apostle's practice, and you may see how he undervalues the censoriousness of the *Corinthians*, who treated him, as if he had been accountable to them rather than to Christ : *let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful : but with me it is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment ; yea, I judge not mine own self, but he that judgeth me is the Lord* (b).

Secondly, It includes diligence and application to his master's service, and thus the faithful servant is opposed to the sloathful one, who hid his master's talent in the earth. A sloathful servant, in the common affairs of life, is a bad character ; but it is much worse in a servant of Christ ; and yet how many are there, who wear the badge and character of Christ's ministers, but are very seldom employed in his service ; the work of the ministry is not fulfilled by our appearing in the pulpit, once in a week, or in a month, but it is to

(a) Gal. 1. 10.

(b) 1 Cor. 4. 1.

be the chief business of our lives: we are not only to preach the word on the *Lord's day*, but to be instant in season, and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine (a). It is an awful charge the apostle gives his son Timothy, *Be thou an example to the believers in word and conversation.—Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.—Meditate on these things and give thy self wholly to them. Take heed to thy self, and to thy doctrine, continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thy self and them that hear thee.* What variety of expressions does he use, to persuade this young *Evangelist* to diligence and application in his master's service: and his counsel will be regarded by all that desire to be found faithful, when they consider that it is written, *Cursed is he that does the work of the Lord negligently.*

Thus I have considered the character and commendation of the person; *A good and faithful servant.* I go on

Secondly, To consider his Lord's approbation of him, *well done, thou hast been faithful over a few things.* This sentence was not pronounced till he had finished his work, and was discharged from any farther service. God is pleased sometimes to encourage his servants in the way, but he does not deliver his final judgment of them, 'till they come to the end of their service; there have been some that have run well for a time, but then something has hindered them; and others have put their hands to the plough, and looked back; who are so far from having done well, that in our Saviour's account they are not fit for the kingdom of God (b). But when our Lord comes to reckon with us, and put the whole of our ser-

(a) 1 Tim. 4. 12, 13.

(b) Luke 9. 16.

vice together, then will be the time of retribution; and it will be happy for us if upon the whole, he will say to us, *well done!* considering how many weaknesses and imperfections attend our best services, and that without the blood of Christ, God would reject them, and say, *who has required such things at your hands?* but how kind and gracious is our merciful Redeemer, who covers the infirmities of his faithful servants, and makes no mention of them in the day of account; the best and most faithful servants of Christ may sometimes be mistaken in their duty, or discharge it in a careless manner; but there is no mention made of this in my text, 'tis all covered and forgotten, and their Lord declares his acceptance of their persons and services, by saying *well done!*

But the reason of his approbation follows, *thou hast been faithful over a few things*: though the servant in my text was intrusted with five talents; yet this was but a small trust, in comparison of the greater blessings which are in reserve for him in heaven; *when he shall be made ruler over many things*: but at present all faithful ministers of Christ are intrusted with a few things of great consequence and importance. And amongst others,

First, With the great concerns of their Master's glory and interest in the world, with the preaching of his gospel, and the propagating of his kingdom; they are to fight his battles, and to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*: for this purpose, they are *to endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and not to entangle themselves with the affairs of this life, that they may please him who has chosen them to be soldiers*. A faithful servant of Christ, ought not to mind his own concerns so much as the concerns of his Master, nor to consult his own honour and reputation, when they stand in competition with his.

his. This was the spirit and temper of the apostles, and primitive christians, who rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer in the cause of Christ.

Secondly, They are intrusted with the sacred truths of the gospel ; which were first delivered to the apostles, and by them committed to faithful men; *the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also* (a). Now among these truths we may certainly reckon, the purposes of divine grace concerning the salvation of the elect from before the foundations of the world. The ruin of mankind, by the fall of *Adam*, and their recovery by Christ; the doctrine of justification by the righteousness and death of the Redeemer, with the necessity of faith, repentance, and the new creature. These doctrines they are to preach, and to defend; *O Timothy*, says the apostle, keep that that is committed to thy trust: that is, those doctrines and truths which thou hast learned from me, keep them entire, hold them fast, convey them down to posterity pure and uncorrupted. Take heed to thy doctrine, that it depart not from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Thirdly, They are intrusted with the care of their people's souls; the chief shepherd of the sheep has appointed them the oversight of the several parts of his flock, to bring sinners into it, and to build up the saints in their most holy faith: these they are to feed with the bread of life, to guide in the ways of truth and holiness, and to watch for their souls, as those that must give an account: private christians are only to account for themselves, but Ministers are to account for the souls committed to their charge;

(a) Tim. 2. 2.

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and happy is that servant who can do it with joy, and not with grief!

These are some of those things which are committed in trust to the ministers of Christ; the good servant in my text, had been faithful in them all: we may therefore suppose his Lord and Master expressing his approbation of him after this manner:

“ I entrusted thee with my talents, and have
 “ given thee time and opportunity to improve
 “ them; thou hast now given up thine account,
 “ and I acknowledge thou hast been a faithful
 “ steward; thou hast fulfilled thy ministry to my
 “ satisfaction; and hast taken heed to the flock over
 “ which thou wast made an overseer: I have observed
 “ farther, thy faith and patience, and how that for my
 “ name sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted:
 “ I take notice also of the success of thy mini-
 “ stry, and the increase of my kingdom, that the
 “ pleasure of the Lord hath prospered in thy
 “ hands, and that there are many who will be thy
 “ crown and thy joy in the last day: I have re-
 “ viewed the whole of thy conduct, since I en-
 “ trusted thee with my goods and am pleased with
 “ it: it has indeed been attended with some frail-
 “ ties and infirmities, but upon the whole, 'tis
 “ well done; thou hast been faithful to me in a
 “ few things, I will therefore now *make thee ruler*
 “ *over many things. Enter into the joy of thy Lord.*

This brings me

Thirdly, To consider the reward of the good and faithful servant, which consists of two parts. of great dignity and honour; and of perfect and consummate bliss.

First, Every good and faithful servant of Christ shall be advanced to great dignity and honour: *I will make thee ruler over many things*: here, he must expect to suffer reproach for his fidelity to his Lord
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and Master; but *the sufferings of this present life, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed*: the more we do and suffer for him here, the higher will be our advancement in the kingdom of heaven hereafter; for as all men do not make an equal improvement of their talents, 'tis probable they will not have the same reward. *There is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another in glory; and so it will be in the resurrection of the dead (a).* The reward of receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet, differs from that of a righteous man (b): And in this very parable, the rewards are in proportion to the improvement; he that had gained ten pounds, had authority given him over ten cities; and he that had gained five, had authority over five (c). But notwithstanding all this, all glorified saints will be compleatly happy, and will be advanced to the highest stations of honour and dignity: they will all be made *kings and priests to God and the Father, and inherit the kingdom prepared for them, from the foundations of the world.* They will all wear crowns of glory that shall never fade away, and sit down on the same throne with Christ himself; they will all share the honour of judging the world, and when they have seen the downfall of all the enemies of Christ's kingdom, they will reign with him for ever and ever. But here it must be remembered that the rewards of another world, are not of debt, but of grace; for they are vastly beyond the proportion of our services; the labours and sufferings of the most eminent servants of Christ, are not to be laid in the balance against the lowest degree of the heavenly glory: nay, I will venture to say, that our best services deserve no manner of recompence at all;

(a) 1 Cor. 15, 41. (b) Matth. 10. 41. (c) Luke 19. 16, 17.
for

for when we have done our best, we are but unprofitable servants, and have done no more than was our duty to do; therefore tho' the scripture sometimes calls the happiness of heaven by the name of a reward, we must not imagine it to be a debt due to our services, but all our expectations must be from the divine grace and favour. But,

Secondly, The faithful servants of Christ will not only be advanced to the highest honours, but will be possessed of the most consummate bliss and happiness. *They shall enter into the joy of their Lord.*

We may observe here, that heaven is a place of perfect joy; this world is a scene of sorrow and trouble to good men, but the next will be a state of unmixed pleasure; there will be no sin, and therefore no sorrow; there will be no enemy to vex us, and therefore no disturbance of our peace: *No lion shall be there, says the prophet, nor any ravenous beast, but the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow, and fighting shall fly away* (a). There will certainly be the best society, for there is God, and Christ, and an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; there are all the patriarchs and prophets of the old, and all the apostles and martyrs of the new testament, together with all our departed friends and brethren in Christ, with whom we shall have the most sweet and delightful conversation: besides, the employment of saints in heaven is perfectly agreeable to their natures, and according to their utmost wishes and desires, and therefore it must be a state of perfect joy.

(a) Isa. 35. 9, 10.

We may observe farther, that the happiness of heaven is here called the joy of our Lord, 'tis the joy that he has purchased, and which he is now in the possession of; in the midst of this joy, Christ himself is now sitting as a conqueror upon his throne, smiling upon every soul that is entred into it: it was the prospect of this joy, that animated our blessed Saviour under his heavy sufferings; *for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame (a):* 'tis the prospect of the same joy that encourages the christian's faith and patience: it was in the faith and hope of this joy, that *Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of reward (b).* This therefore is a farther recommendation of the happiness of heaven; it would be a pleasure to a christian to be with Christ in any place, or in the most afflictive circumstances; but to be with him in such a place of joy, and in such high and advanced stations of glory, must be such a degree of happiness as eye hath not yet seen, nor ear heard, nor is it possible for the heart of man to conceive.

Now into all this joy, will every faithful servant of Christ enter when he has finished his labours and sufferings in this world. And how will he enter? why, with all the marks of triumph and victory, with a crown upon his head, and a palm of victory in his hand; a guard of angels shall convoy the departing soul thro' the regions of the air, and when the gates of heaven are opened to receive it, it shall be welcomed with the acclamations of the innumerable company; *for if there be joy in heaven at the repentance of a sinner, how much louder must be the triumph when he enters into glory: and if heaven rejoices, surely the be-*

(a) Heb. 12. 2.

(b) Heb. 11. 26.

liever himself must be filled with unspeakable pleasure, when with the body of flesh he hath put off every thing that might make him uneasy, on his own account, or on the account of the kingdom and interest of Christ, and is entring into an everlasting kingdom of peace and love; for there are no contentions in heaven, no back-bitings, nor evil-speakings, no divisions, nor unkindnesses of any sort. These might interrupt the harmony of the place, and therefore they are excluded; songs and everlasting joy being on every head, and universal gladness in every countenance.

I shall now make some remarks on this discourse:

And *First*, we may observe, that all our talents of nature and grace are from God, *every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights*: and there is a beautiful variety in the distribution of them amongst men; some have more and others fewer, some have talents of one kind and some of another, but all are from God; the apostle takes notice of this, in the distribution of those miraculous gifts which were bestowed on the primitive church: *there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, who worketh all and in all* (a). And this is equally true concerning the common blessings of providence; so that we may say with the apostle, *who maketh thee to differ, or what hast thou that thou hast not received?*

Secondly, All the distributions of nature and grace amongst men, are to be improved in their master's service; for they are not their own goods, but his, who expects they should return them

(a) 1 Cor. 12. 4, &c.

with advantage: the talent was taken from the sloathful servant, and a severe sentence pass'd upon him because he did not improve it as he ought; *thou wicked and sloathful servant, thou oughtest at least to have put my money to the exchangers, that I might have had it again with usury: take therefore the talent from him, and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (a). For this reason we are called stewards, and it is required of stewards that they be faithful: ministers are stewards of the manifold grace of God, as private christians are of their estates, of their capacities and opportunities of service, and in general, of all the blessings which divine providence confers upon them. It follows from hence,

Thirdly, That there must certainly be a time of reckoning. The particular time when you or I shall be required to give an account of our stewardship, is uncertain, but sooner or later, we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Some have thought our time of reckoning will not be 'till the end of the world: but then what must become of the soul in the mean time, and where must it exist? must it be happy or miserable? or, will it sleep with the body 'till the resurrection? the soul can neither be happy nor miserable 'till it has given up it's account, and received it's sentence; and to suppose it to sleep 'till the resurrection, is contrary to the express language of scripture, which says, that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord. It must therefore follow, that Christ will reckon with all persons at their death. For then their labours and services being ended, 'tis proper they

(a) Ver. 26, 27.

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should receive according to what they have done in the body, whether it be good or evil.

Fourthly, 'Tis divine grace alone that enables us to be faithful. Our first parents in the state of innocence were intrusted with a great many talents, and were left to manage them by their natural powers; but they betrayed their trust by giving way to the temptation of the serpent: now if man in a state of innocence with all the powers of nature in their full strength, did not retain his integrity, what can be expected from his fallen posterity, whose powers are broken, and who have conceived false notions of God, as if he was an hard master, reaping where he did not sow, and gathering where he did not straw. Besides our adversary the devil is constantly tempting us either to hide our talents in the earth, or to consume them on our lusts: nothing therefore but the almighty grace of God can enable us to be faithful, this alone makes us sincere and diligent in our master's service; without divine assistance, we can do nothing: the apostle *Paul* asserts this in the strongest terms, when he says, concerning himself, that he was *One who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful* (a). So that here is no room for boasting, the best and most faithful servants of Christ must be covered with shame, when they consider the many frailties and imperfections of their best services; and if upon the whole, their Lord is pleased to accept and approve them, they must set the crown on the head of free-grace, for they were faithful only because they obtained mercy of the Lord to be so.

Fifthly, Christ will not only commend, but graciously reward the faithful services of his people. But what are our services for Christ, that he should

(a) 1 Cor. 7. 25.

commend them! how few, and how imperfect! if they should be *weighed in the balance of the sanctuary*, would they not *be found wanting*? But our merciful Redeemer does not *despise the day of small things*, but *accepts it according to what we have, and not according to what we have not*; he *separates the chaff from the wheat*; and having covered the one with the mantle of forgiveness, he looks on the other with delight and pleasure, saying, *Well done good and faithful servant!* nay Christ will not only commend the faithful services of his people, but will graciously reward them, *thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* Let it still be remembered that the reward is not of debt but of grace; for there is no proportion between our services and our crown; as the apostle observes, when he says, *these light afflictions, which we endure for a few moments, shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

Sixthly, We may infer from the whole, the consummate happiness and felicity of all Christ's faithful servants, and ministers, at the end of their labours and sufferings in this life, *they will then enter into the joy of their Lord.* Joy is one of the most delightful passions; 'tis the wing of the soul, that carries it above all its fears and temptations: now if the prospect of heaven at a distance, fills the believing soul with pleasure, how great must be the transport when 'tis actually entering into the joy of his Lord! when in a moment, or the twinkling of an eye, it finds its self transported from earth to heaven, from a bed of pain and sorrow, filled with all the agonies of death, and surrounded with the tears and lamentations of friends endeavouring to retain the departing spirit, to a world of consummate joy and bliss, where his eyes shall be entertained with the most surprising

zing objects, and his ears with 'the most harmonious melody, where he shall be advanced to the highest degrees of honour, and be filled with all the fulness of God; and this not for a few months or years, but for ever; for *in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

Well, this is the happy exchange that our Reverend Brother, the late worthy pastor of this church, has made, who a few weeks ago was employed in his Lord's service, but has now received his everlasting reward; he was then a member of the church militant, but is now joyned to the church triumphant; then he was with us in this vale of tears, but is now gone before us *into the joy of his Lord.* Blessed soul! whose robes are now washed and made white in the blood of the lamb, who is now satisfied with the divine likeness, and perfect, even as his Father who is in heaven is perfect.

I shall now give you some short memoirs of the life of this excellent person, and then endeavour to represent his character, that you may be sensible of the loss you have sustained by his death, and may be followers of him, as he followed Christ.

The reverend Mr. *Matthew Clarke* was born at a solitary house by the side of *Leicester Forest*, Feb. 2. 1663. His father having been ejected from the established church at *Narborough*, for nonconformity, had retired to this place to cover himself from the violence of his persecutors; but having devoted himself to the service of Christ in the ministry, he removed after some time to little *Bowden*, and gathered a congregation of protestant dissenters in the town of *Market Harborough*, with whom he continued between forty and fifty years with great usefulness and reputation.

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Tho' the times in which our reverend brother was born and educated were very discouraging by reason of the rigorous execution of the penal laws against protestant dissenters, whereby the people were dispersed and their ministers fined, imprisoned, and banished five miles from all corporation towns, yet this good man in the midst of all this darkness devoted his only son to the ministry, and took upon himself the chief part of his education; tho' he afterwards placed him for some time under the care of another learned tutor, with whom he finished his studies (a). I shall make no mention in this place of his quick improvement in the several arts and sciences; but only observe that divine grace by an early conversion, sanctified all his studies, and made them subservient to that great work for which he was designed.

He began his ministry in the year 1684, a time of as great severity against protestant dissenters as had been known since the restoration; and though there was no other prospect at that time, but of poverty and reproach for men of his profession, he resolved, by divine assistance, to run all hazards for the support of the persecuted interest of Christ; and accordingly, preached up and down in private houses, as often as he had opportunity. His first sermon was from those words of the apostle, *By the grace of God, I am what I am* (b).

The first three years of his ministry were spent chiefly in assisting his Reverend Father; but in the year 1687, when the penal laws were suspended, he accepted of an invitation to *Sandwich* in *Kent* where he continued with great acceptance for about two years, and left behind him a name

(a) The Reverend Mr. Woodhouse.

(b) 1 Cor. 15. 10.

and memorial amongst that people, which is not forgotten to this day.

In the year 1689, he came to *London*, and was invited to assist the Reverend and aged Mr. *Stephen Ford*, then pastor of this church: after some time he was joyned with him in the pastoral office, and at length in the year 1694, he succeeded him in the whole of his work, from which time, for the space of thirty-two years, even to the day of his death, *you your selves know after what manner he has been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which have befallen him; and how he kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but shewed, and taught you publickly, and from house to house the whole counsel of God, testifying to all, his hearers, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I am sensible it is a very difficult task to give the world a just idea of this excellent person; they who were strangers to his usefulness, may imagine I have flattered his memory; when others who had a more intimate acquaintance with his publick and private life, will conclude, that I have fallen below my subject, and not expressed his incomparable worth: but let such remember, that I am writing a character, not a panegyrick, and describing a man subject to like passions and infirmities with our selves, of which no man was more sensible than himself. However, I shall speak freely, and impartially what I know and believe of my Reverend Brother, without regarding the censures of others.

He was a person of good learning and of a solid judgment in religion; his acquaintance with the original languages of the bible descended to him as it were by inheritance, his father being one of the greatest criticks in the oriental tongues, of the age in which he lived:

in his younger years he gave himself very much to reading and meditation, and made himself master of the several controversies which have been debated amongst learned men on the several articles of the christian faith; so that tho' he began his ministry, when he was not more than twenty one years of age, he appeared well furnished for the sacred imployment, a work-man that needed not be ashamed.

In his private judgment he followed the sentiments of the judicious Mr. *Clavin* in those points of controversy wherein that great man distinguished himself against the *Pelagians*, *Arians*, *Socinians*, and other heresies of the times in which he lived. The doctrines which he apprehended of greatest consequence, and which were the chief subjects of his ministry were, the eternal counsels of Divine wisdom, concerning the salvation of the elect, the ruin of mankind by the fall of *Adam*, and their restitution to the Divine favour by the satisfaction of Christ: The Person and operations of the Holy Spirit: The doctrines of salvation by free-grace, and of justification by the blood and righteousness of the Redeemer, which is unto all, and upon all that believe, without any difference: The privileges, and benefits of the new covenant; with which he constantly enforced the moral obligations that christians are under to the several parts of their duty (a): But that which lay near his heart, especially in

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his

(a) I cannot represent his practice, better than in his own words.
"As to the nature and form of a church, it's officers and discipline, we may apply the words of our Saviour, *these ought ye not to have left undone*. And there are other things which ministers ought more especially to regard; they are to preach Christ and make him the alpha, and omega of their ministry; his name should triumph in all our sermons; his life, death, resurrection and intercession, the things he has done, suffered, and purchased; these were the great subjects of the apostle's discourses
"We preach not our selves but Christ Jesus the Lord; to which
"succeeds

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his latter days, was the support and defence of the glorious person of Christ, as God-man, and Mediator, which is one of the great mysteries of godliness, the pillar and ground of truth; you who constantly attended his ministry are witnesses how frequently he entertained you on this subject, and some of his brethren in the ministry, who were favoured with more free conversation with him, know the clearness of his judgment in these points: he was therefore sound in the faith; nor did he come behind any of his brethren in a true christian zeal for the service of Christ, or the support and maintenance of any of the important points of revelation, as far as the laws of nature or the rules of christianity would allow.

It must be confessed, and I mention it to the lasting honour of his name and memory, that he was a person of great candour, and moderation; he was for speaking the truth in love; and in all the controversies of the age, careful to avoid extreams: though he constantly preached the doctrines he believed, and practised those forms of worship, and sacred order which appeared to

“succeeds the work of the Spirit, and the grace of God, in making
“an effectual application of Christ, and his purchased benefits to
“the souls of Men; which lead to the great doctrines of faith,
“repentance, the divine birth, the new creature, effectual calling,
“sanctification, and holiness, as things without which no man,
“can be saved; here should our zeal chiefly be laid.” Mr. Clarke’s
“sermon at the Sep. of Mr. Hurryon. p. 295.

“He is the true gospel preacher that takes in the whole counsel
“of God, law and gospel, grace and duty, doctrine and practice,
“faith and repentance that tells men what Christ has done and
“suffered in order to their salvation; and then what he requires
“of them, and promises to them on their part in order to it. I
“have my self been told by some, that if persons would hear discourses of faith and grace, they must worship in places of such
“a denomination, if they would hear a discourse of works and
“morality, they must repair to such a place of worship; but I
“don’t know, why both may not be heard in one and the same
“place, sure I am they should, and I hope they are. 16 p. 293.

him

him most consonant to the will of Christ in his word, he never made his own judgment a standard of the faith and practice of his brethren; his soul was too generous, and his charity too extensive, to confine salvation within the limits of a single party; he was therefore willing to assist among societies of different denominations, and to give the right hand of fellowship to all who held the same glorious head with himself. He loved the face and image of Christ where-ever he beheld it, and as he was very solicitous lest an enormous pretence to charity, should desert and expose the glorious truths of the gospel; he was no less fearful, lest an ungoverned zeal for truth, should make a shameful inroad on christian love; for as truth and love were happily joyned in his own soul, it was his earnest desire they might not be set at variance in the souls of his brethren.

His publick performances were laboured in private; for he was afraid to serve God with that which cost him nothing: in all his discourses he endeavoured to give every text its proper meaning: "For, says he in one of his printed sermons "allusions may be, and are often made; "but to interpret scripture merely by the sound "of words, is playing with our bibles, and trifling "in the preacher, as it serves only to impose on "the people, and induces them to think the text "speaks what it never intended (a). "His method was just and regular, his language plain and familiar, and chiefly drawn out of the holy scriptures, he carefully avoided the extreams of excellency of speech, and vulgar expressions, which latter, he used to say, exposed religion to contempt, and had a tendency to make men laugh at a time when

(a) Sermon for the Reverend Mr. *Hurryon*. pag. 293.

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above all others they ought to be most serious.

Accordingly, his behaviour in the pulpit was grave and reverent, and such as commanded the attention of his hearers; he had a graceful utterance, free from affectation; he knew how to enter the conscience, and soften all the inward passions of the soul. How often have you heard him like a *Boanerges*, striking the sinner to the ground, and making him cry out, trembling and astonished, *what shall I do to be saved?* and at other times, like a son of consolation, representing the precious promises of the gospel, and winning the soul over to Christ. In a word, *he was an eloquent man in the pulpit, mighty in the scriptures, and being fervent in spirit, he spake, and taught diligently the things of the Lord, and mightily convinced his hearers.* An evidence of this, was the great success that attended his ministry. His audience in all places where he stately laboured, was serious, and crowded. When he first came to this church, it was one of the smallest amongst the tribes of our *Israel*; but the word of God, by a divine blessing upon his labours, did so mightily increase, that great numbers were added to it from time to time; insomuch that at his death, he left it one of the most numerous and flourishing congregations in the city.

He was frequent and constant in his ministerial employment, no man preached oftner, and to better purpose than *Mr. Clarke*. He was in labours more abundant, and I have sometimes feared to the prejudice of his health. But as every congregation was desirous of his labours, he was so good as hardly to know how to give them a denial: indeed his heart was in his work, he was willing to be spent in his Master's service,
and

and it was the greatest pleasure of his life to be doing good to souls.

I must not omit his extraordinary gift in prayer, especially on particular occasions, wherein the welfare of families, the lives of useful persons, or the publick good of his country was concerned; how would he wrestle with the Almighty, and fill his mouth with arguments! how fervent was his spirit, and with what a rich variety of expressions would he pour out his soul to God, as if he had resolved before-hand not to let him go, except he heard him: what a blessing to a nation, a church, or a family, is such a man of prayer!

These ministerial endowments were farther adorned with an unaffected piety, and devotion of mind. He was usually with God in secret some hours in the morning, before his family was stirring, but how he spent these hours of retirement, will not be known, till he that sees in secret, shall reward him openly. His family was a house of prayer, and the whole of his conversation was exemplary and useful: it was the great desire of his life to see his brethren in the ministry walking circumspectly towards them that are without; for he would often say, "That men were to be esteemed as much for their manner of life, as for their art of preaching; and that an orthodox head would not atone for a corrupt life." This was his settled judgment, and the rule of his practice; and I may venture to say, without suspicion of flattery, *that in all these things, he was an example to the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.*

One thing more was very peculiar in this extraordinary person, which was the excellent temper of his spirit, in which there was an agreeable mixture of the gentleman and christian; there was something sweet and agreeable in his aspect.

He was of a cheerful temper; affable, and courteous to all men; he had a great government of his passions, being seldom angry; but if he was so at any time, he took care not to let the sun go down on his wrath; he spake evil of no man; and used to say, "he would not be of an implacable spirit for the whole world." There was nothing of uncharitableness or censoriousness in his make and frame, nor did any thing grieve him so much as the unnatural quarrels and divisions amongst christians, and ministers of the same faith and hope with himself; of these he complained both in publick and private; I wish I could say, they had no manner of influence in bringing down his hoary head with sorrow to the grave. If we consider him in the several relations in which he stood, I believe few persons have filled them up to greater advantage, he was a kind and loving husband, a tender and indulgent parent, a faithful and conscientious pastor, liberal almost to a fault, to the poor; and upon the whole, a sincere, upright man, in whose spirit there was no guile. The several qualifications which the apostle gives of a good bishop met in him, as much as in any man I have known, *He was blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, nor greedy of filthy lucre; but patient; not a brawler, nor covetous, one that ruled well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; not a novice; but one that had a good report, even of them that are without (a).*

If there was any alloy to these extraordinary qualities, it was an excess of modesty, and diffidence in himself; for though he had a quick penetration into men and things, yet being de-

(a) 1 Tim. 3. 2, 3, 4, 6.

firous, as much as possible, to live peaceably with all men, he chose in his latter days, to retire in some measure from publick business, rather than give offence to any, which gave some little check to that universal influence, his great name must otherwise have given him, in all affairs relating to the dissenting interest.

*Tis no wonder that a person of such accomplishments should have the esteem, and respect of all who had the happiness of his acquaintance; his conversation was coveted both in city and country by all ranks, and orders of men, especially by his brethren in the ministry; the elder of whom loved him as a brother, and the younger revered him as a father; I believe no man of his profession had more friends, and fewer enemies; for indeed that must be a sad character in life that could be an open, and avowed enemy to good *Mr. Clarke*, who was the delight of his friends, and in the opinion of all disinterested persons, an ornament to his profession, and the glory and honour of that particular cause he espoused. One thing farther crowned the happiness of this excellent person, which was, that he did not outlive his usefulness, but supported his character and reputation to the last sabbath that he lived; and though he did not die so full of days, as we could have wished, he went off the stage full of honour and amidst the sighs and tears of all that have any real concern for pure and undefiled religion in general, and more especially for the declining interest of Christ amongst protestant dissenters. *My father, my father the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!*

His death was sudden and unexpected to his friends, but not to himself, who felt the decays of nature, and had received the awful sentence in himself some months ago. He spoke to me concerning his dissolution with great serenity and

satisfaction of mind, as one that was desirous to leave this world, as soon as it should please God, for a better. He accordingly settled his worldly affairs, and with a firm faith and trust in Christ resigned himself to the will of God. Several of the last sermons he preached, and the very last prayer he offered up to God in his family, will not quickly be forgotten by them that were present. Some years ago when he had been struggling with a malignant fever for several weeks, and his life was given up by the most skilful, and eminent physicians, he was snatched out of the territories of death, by the arm of fervent and importunate prayer; most of the ministers of this city assisting his church in offering up daily supplications to God for so useful and valuable a life; and I never knew a more remarkable answer; for the distemper took an unusual turn, and God was pleased to add nineteen years to his life: but now the seizure was so violent, as hardly left any room for intercession, universal nature was oppressed at once, his speech and understanding were lost in a few minutes, and when he had languished in this manner from Thursday till the morning of the Lord's-day following, he departed in peace, amidst the tears and lamentations of his relations and friends; and went to keep an eternal sabbath with his dear Redeemer, from whose mouth he has now received that blessed sentence, *Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

I will not attempt to aggravate your grief any farther, for the loss of this eminent servant of Christ, but only take the liberty to recommend to you these three things.

First, Be deeply affected with the hand of God; for it is an awakening providence you are under.
You

You of this church have lost your spiritual Father, who naturally cared for you, and went in and out before you, feeding you with knowledge and dividing amongst you the bread of life; the sinners of this congregation have lost an awakening preacher; his family the support and comfort of their lives, and the church of God a pillar and standard-bearer. Let every one smite on his breast and say, What have I contributed towards such an awful providence? and you, more especially, who have enjoyed his labours for many years, ask your selves such questions as these: Have I improved his ministry, strengthened his hands, been thankful for his labours, and prayed as I ought for so valuable a life? And let all that have the interest of Christ at heart, mourn the loss of so able a minister of the new testament, and say, with the prophet, *by whom Lord shall Jacob arise, for he is small?*

Secondly, *Remember him who had the rule over you, and who has spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of his conversation.* Remember his doctrine, his counsels, and the travel of his soul for your salvation; remember his affectionate concern, for your families, and for the rising generation; follow his faith, his patience, and charity; imitate his holy and inoffensive conversation, and let his name and memory be precious amongst you. And shall I add one thing more, remember then his widow and fatherless children; for though they may not absolutely need your support, 'tis your duty to give them respect and honour; for in them your pastor lives now he is dead. I mention this the rather, that you may wipe off the reproach that is commonly cast upon dissenting congregations, that as soon as their mi-

(a) Heb. 13. 9.

nisters are dead, their families are buried and forgotten.

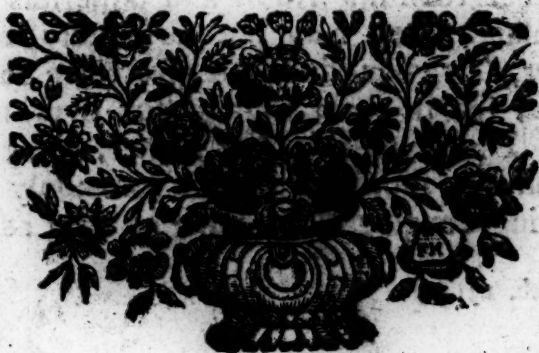
Thirdly, pray to him who has the residue of the Spirit, to make up your loss, by sending you another able and faithful pastor, who may break to you the bread of life. Keep together in the way of your duty, waiting on God for counsel and direction: *Let all men know you are the disciples of Christ, by your loving one another*: the best of men have their infirmities and passions, *but bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*, remember how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity: *I beseech you therefore, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.* (a). Finally, my brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you (b).

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 10.

(b) 2 Cor. 13. 11.

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4. Of the Wisdom of being Holy. 5. Of the Folly of Sin. 6. Of the Joy which attends Godliness. 7. Of the Judgments that attend Sinners. By John Edwards, D. D.

XIX. The History of the antient Abbies, Monasteries, Hospitals, Cathedral and Collegiate Churches. Being two additional Volumes to Sir William Dugdale's Monasticon Anglicanum. Containing, The original and first Establishment of all the religious Orders that ever were in Great Britain, being those of the Benedictines, Cluniacks, Cistercians, Regular Canons of St. Augustine, Carthusians, Gilbertines, Trinitarians, Premonstratenses, and Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, treated of in the Monasticon Anglicanum. As also of the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Augustinian Friars, Regular Canons of Arroasia, Brigittin's, Monks of Fontevrand, of Savigni, and of Tiron. Crouched-Friars, Friars of Penance, or of the Sack, and Bethlehemites, not spoken of by Sir William Dugdale, and Mr. Dodsworth. The Foundation of their several Monasteries; a very large Collection of many hundreds of Grants and Charters belonging to them; besides several thousands abridg'd; the final Suppression of all those Places; with some Account of the Manner how their vast Lands and Possessions were dispos'd of; there are added Catalogues of the Abbots, and other Superiors of those Religious Houses, and of all Persons eminent and distinguish'd for Piety, Learning, and other Accomplishments in the several Orders; with short Lives of as many of them as have been transmitted down to us. Collected from above two hundred of the best Historians extant, and from ancient Manuscripts in the Bodleian and Cotton Libraries, and many more in the Hands of learned Antiquaries, and other curious Gentlemen. Whose Names may be seen in the Preface. Adorn'd with a considerable Number of Copper Plates of the several Habits of the Religious Orders; the Ichnographies of Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, and the Ruins of Sacred Places destroy'd, and gone to decay; and Prospects of others that are still standing. By Capt. John Stevens.